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SWINBURNE'S COLLECTED  
POETICAL WORKS



SWINBURNE'S COLLECTED  
POETICAL WORKS

VOLUME II



LONDON  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

1927

**Printed in Great Britain by T. and A. CONSTABLE LTD.  
at the University Press, Edinburgh**

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# **TRISTRAM OF LYONESSE**



TO MY BEST FRIEND  
THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

VOL. II.

A



*Spring speaks again, and all our woods are stirred,  
And all our wide glad wastes astir around,  
That twice have heard keen April's clarion sound  
Since here we first together saw and heard  
Spring's light reverberate and reiterate word  
Shine forth and speak in season. Life stands crowned  
Here with the best one thing it ever found,  
As of my soul's best birthdays dawns the third.*

*There is a friend that as the wise man saith  
Cleaves closer than a brother : nor to me  
Hath time not shown, through days like waves at strife,  
This truth more sure than all things else but death,  
This pearl most perfect found in all the sea  
That washes toward your feet these waifs of life.*

THE PINES : *April 1882*



PRELUDE  
TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

LOVE, that is first and last of all things made,  
The light that has the living world for shade,  
The spirit that for temporal veil has on  
The souls of all men woven in unison,  
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought  
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,  
And alway through new act and passion new  
Shines the divine same body and beauty through,  
The body spiritual of fire and light  
That is to worldly noon as noon to night ;  
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man  
And spirit within the flesh whence breath began ;  
Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime ;  
Love, that is blood within the veins of time ;  
That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,  
Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,  
And with the pulse and motion of his breath  
Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and  
death,  
The sweet twain chords that make the sweet tune live  
Through day and night of things alternative,  
Through silence and through sound of stress and  
strife,  
And ebb and flow of dying death and life ;

Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's ears,  
Whence all men's eyes take fire from sparks of tears,  
That binds on all men's feet or chains or wings ;  
Love, that is root and fruit of terrene things ;  
Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,  
The whole world's fiery forces not burn down ;  
Love, that what time his own hands guard his head  
The whole world's wrath and strength shall not strike  
dead ;

Love, that if once his own hands make his grave  
The whole world's pity and sorrow shall not save ;  
Love, that for very life shall not be sold,  
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with gold ;  
So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,  
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell ;  
So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,  
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven ;  
Love that is fire within thee and light above,  
And lives by grace of nothing but of love ;  
Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire  
Led these twain to the life of tears and fire ;  
Through many and lovely days and much delight  
Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.

Yea, but what then ? albeit all this were thus,  
And soul smote soul and left it ruinous,  
And love led love as eyeless men lead men,  
Through chance by chance to deathward—Ah, what  
then ?

Hath love not likewise led them further yet,  
Out through the years where memories rise and set,  
Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,  
Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail  
Seen as red flame through spectral float of fume,  
Each with the blush of its own special bloom

On the fair face of its own coloured light,  
Distinguishable in all the host of night,  
Divisible from all the radiant rest  
And separable in splendour? Hath the best  
Light of love's all, of all that burn and move,  
A better heaven than heaven is? Hath not love  
Made for all these their sweet particular air  
To shine in, their own beams and names to bear,  
Their ways to wander and their wards to keep,  
Till story and song and glory and all things sleep?  
Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead  
Their musical soft memories, and kept red  
The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes,  
The sunsets of their stories in his skies,  
The blush of their dead blood in lips that speak  
Of their dead lives, and in the listener's cheek  
That trembles with the kindling pity lit  
In gracious hearts for some sweet fever-fit,  
A fiery pity enkindled of pure thought  
By tales that make their honey out of nought,  
The faithless faith that lives without belief  
Its light life through, the griefless ghost of grief?  
Yea, as warm night refashions the sere blood  
In storm-struck petal or in sun-struck bud,  
With tender hours and tempering dew to cure  
The hunger and thirst of day's distemperature  
And ravin of the dry discolouring hours,  
Hath he not bid relume their flameless flowers  
With summer fire and heat of lamping song,  
And bid the short-lived things, long dead, live long,  
And thought remake their wan funereal fames,  
And the sweet shining signs of women's names  
That mark the months out and the weeks anew  
He moves in changeless change of seasons through

To fill the days up of his dateless year  
Flame from Queen Helen to Queen Guenèvere ?  
For first of all the sphery signs whereby  
Love severs light from darkness, and most high,  
In the white front of January there glows  
The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose :  
And gold-eyed as the shore-flower shelterless  
Whereon the sharp-breathèd sea blows bitterness,  
A storm-star that the seafarers of love  
Strain their wind-wearied eyes for glimpses of,  
Shoots keen through February's grey frost and damp  
The lamplike star of Hero for a lamp ;  
The star that Marlowe sang into our skies  
With mouth of gold, and morning in his eyes ; .  
And in clear March across the rough blue sea  
The signal sapphire of Alcyone  
Makes bright the blown brows of the wind-foot year ;  
And shining like a sunbeam-smitten tear  
Full ere it fall, the fair next sign in sight  
Burns opal-wise with April-coloured light  
When air is quick with song and rain and flame,  
My birth-month star that in love's heaven hath name  
Iseult, a light of blossom and beam and shower,  
My singing sign that makes the song-tree flower ;  
Next like a pale and burning pearl beyond  
The rose-white sphere of flower-named Rosamond  
Signs the sweet head of Maytime ; and for June  
Flares like an angered and storm-reddening moon  
Her signal sphere, whose Carthaginian pyre  
Shadowed her traitor's flying sail with fire ;  
Next, glittering as the wine-bright jacinth-stone,  
A star south-risen that first to music shone,  
The keen girl-star of golden Juliet bears  
Light northward to the month whose forehead wears

Her name for flower upon it, and his trees  
 Mix their deep English song with Veronese ;  
 And like an awful sovereign chrysolite  
 Burning, the supreme fire that blinds the night,  
 The hot gold head of Venus kissed by Mars,  
 A sun-flower among small sphered flowers of stars,  
 The light of Cleopatra fills and burns  
 The hollow of heaven whence ardent August yearns ;  
 And fixed and shining as the sister-shed  
 Sweet tears for Phaethon disorbed and dead,  
 The pale bright autumn's amber-coloured sphere,  
 That through September sees the saddening year  
 As love sees change through sorrow, hath to name  
 Francesca's ; and the star that watches flame  
 The embers of the harvest overgone  
 Is Thisbe's, slain of love in Babylon,  
 Set in the golden girdle of sweet signs  
 A blood-bright ruby ; last save one light shines  
 An eastern wonder of sphery chrysopras,  
 The star that made men mad, Angelica's ;  
 And latest named and lordliest, with a sound  
 Of swords and harps in heaven that ring it round,  
 Last love-light and last love-song of the year's,  
 Gleams like a glorious emerald Guenevere's.  
 These are the signs wherethrough the year sees  
 move,  
 Full of the sun, the sun-god which is love,  
 A fiery body blood-red from the heart  
 Outward, with fire-white wings made wide apart,  
 That close not and unclose not, but upright  
 Steered without wind by their own light and might  
 Sweep through the flameless fire of air that rings  
 From heaven to heaven with thunder of wheels and  
 wings

And antiphones of motion-moulded rhyme  
Through spaces out of space and timeless time.

So shine above dead chance and conquered change  
The spherèd signs, and leave without their range  
Doubt and desire, and hope with fear for wife,  
Pale pains, and pleasures long worn out of life.  
Yea, even the shadows of them spiritless,  
Through the dim door of sleep that seem to press,  
Forms without form, a piteous people and blind,  
Men and no men, whose lamentable kind  
The shadow of death and shadow of life compel  
Through semblances of heaven and false-faced hell,  
Through dreams of light and dreams of darkness tost  
On waves innavigable, are these so lost ?  
Shapes that wax pale and shift in swift strange wise,  
Void faces with unspeculative eyes,  
Dim things that gaze and glare, dead mouths that  
move,

Featureless heads discrowned of hate and love,  
Mockeries and masks of motion and mute breath,  
Leavings of life, the superflux of death—  
If these things and no more than these things be  
Left when man ends or changes, who can see ?  
Or who can say with what more subtle sense  
Their subtler natures taste in air less dense  
A life less thick and palpable than ours,  
Warmed with faint fires and sweetened with dead  
flowers

And measured by low music ? how time fares  
In that wan time-forgotten world of theirs,  
Their pale poor world too deep for sun or star  
To live in, where the eyes of Helen are,  
And hers who made as God's own eyes to shine  
The eyes that met them of the Florentine,

Wherein the godhead thence transfigured lit  
All time for all men with the shadow of it?  
Ah, and these too felt on them as God's grace  
The pity and glory of this man's breathing face ;  
For these too, these my lovers, these my twain,  
Saw Dante, saw God visible by pain,  
With lips that thundered and with feet that trod  
Before men's eyes incognisable God ;  
Saw love and wrath and light and night and fire  
Live with one life and at one mouth respire,  
And in one golden sound their whole soul heard  
Sounding, one sweet immitigable word.

They have the night, who had like us the day ;  
We, whom day binds, shall have the night as they.  
We, from the fetters of the light unbound,  
Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound.  
All gifts but one the jealous God may keep  
From our soul's longing, one he cannot—sleep.  
This, though he grudge all other grace to prayer,  
This grace his closed hand cannot choose but spare.  
This, though his ear be sealed to all that live,  
Be it lightly given or lothly, God must give.  
We, as the men whose name on earth is none,  
We too shall surely pass out of the sun ;  
Out of the sound and eyeless light of things,  
Wide as the stretch of life's time-wandering wings,  
Wide as the naked world and shadowless,  
And long-lived as the world's own weariness.  
Us too, when all the fires of time are cold,  
The heights shall hide us and the depths shall hold.  
Us too, when all the tears of time are dry,  
The night shall lighten from her tearless eye.  
Blind is the day and eyeless all its light,  
But the large unbewildered eye of night

Hath sense and speculation ; and the sheer  
Limitless length of lifeless life and clear,  
The timeless space wherein the brief worlds move  
Clothed with light life and fruitful with light love,  
With hopes that threaten, and with fears that cease,  
Past fear and hope, hath in it only peace.

Yet of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,  
Spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears,  
These lives made out of loves that long since were,  
Lives wrought as ours of earth and burning air,  
Fugitive flame, and water of secret springs,  
And clothed with joys and sorrows as with wings,  
Some yet are good, if aught be good, to save  
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave  
Was such not theirs, the twain I take, and give  
Out of my life to make their dead life live  
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath  
Between dead lips forgotten even of death ?  
So many and many of old have given my twain  
Love and live song and honey-hearted pain,  
Whose root is sweetness and whose fruit is sweet,  
So many and with such joy have tracked their feet,  
What should I do to follow ? yet I too,  
I have the heart to follow, many or few  
Be the feet gone before me ; for the way,  
Rose-red with remnant roses of the day  
Westward, and eastward white with stars that break,  
Between the green and foam is fair to take  
For any sail the sea-wind steers for me  
From morning into morning, sea to sea.

## I

## THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

ABOUT the middle music of the spring  
Came from the castled shore of Ireland's king  
A fair ship stoutly sailing, eastward bound  
And south by Wales and all its wonders round  
To the loud rocks and ringing reaches home  
That take the wild wrath of the Cornish foam,  
Past Lyonesse unswallowed of the tides  
And high Carlion that now the steep sea hides  
To the wind-hollowed heights and gusty bays  
Of sheer Tintagel, fair with famous days.  
Above the stem a gilded swallow shone,  
Wrought with straight wings and eyes of glittering  
stone  
As flying sunward oversea, to bear  
Green summer with it through the singing air.  
And on the deck between the rowers at dawn,  
As the bright sail with brightening wind was drawn,  
Sat with full face against the strengthening light  
Iseult, more fair than foam or dawn was white.  
Her gaze was glad past love's own singing of,  
And her face lovely past desire of love.  
Past thought and speech her maiden motions were,  
And a more golden sunrise was her hair.

## 14 THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

The very veil of her bright flesh was made  
As of light woven and moonbeam-coloured shade  
More fine than moonbeams ; white her eyelids shone  
As snow sun-stricken that endures the sun,  
And through their curled and coloured clouds of deep  
Luminous lashes thick as dreams in sleep  
Shone as the sea's depth swallowing up the sky's  
The springs of unimaginable eyes.  
As the wave's subtler emerald is pierced through  
With the utmost heaven's inextricable blue,  
And both are woven and molten in one sleight  
Of amorous colour and implicated light  
Under the golden guard and gaze of noon,  
So glowed their awless amorous plenilune,  
Azure and gold and ardent grey, made strange  
With fiery difference and deep interchange  
Inexplicable of glories multiform ;  
Now as the sullen sapphire swells toward storm  
Foamless, their bitter beauty grew acold,  
And now afire with ardour of fine gold.  
Her flower-soft lips were meek and passionate,  
For love upon them like a shadow sate  
Patient, a foreseen vision of sweet things,  
A dream with eyes fast shut and plumeless wings  
That knew not what man's love or life should be,  
Nor had it sight nor heart to hope or see  
What thing should come, but childlike satisfied  
Watched out its virgin vigil in soft pride  
And unkissed expectation ; and the glad  
Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples had  
Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood  
Beat in the live heart of a lily-bud.  
Between the small round breasts a white way led  
Heavenward, and from slight foot to slender head

The whole fair body flower-like swayed and shone  
Moving, and what her light hand leant upon  
Grew blossom-scented : her warm arms began  
To round and ripen for delight of man  
That they should clasp and circle : her fresh hands,  
Like regent lilies of reflowering lands  
Whose vassal firstlings, crown and star and plume,  
Bow down to the empire of that sovereign bloom,  
Shone sceptreless, and from her face there went  
A silent light as of a God content ;  
Save when, more swift and keen than love or shame,  
Some flash of blood, light as the laugh of flame,  
Broke it with sudden beam and shining speech,  
As dream by dream shot through her eyes, and each  
Outshone the last that lightened, and not one  
Showed her such things as should be borne and  
done.

Though hard against her shone the sunlike face  
That in all change and wreck of time and place  
Should be the star of her sweet living soul.  
Nor had love made it as his written scroll  
For evil will and good to read in yet ;  
But smooth and mighty, without scar or fret,  
Fresh and high-lifted was the helmless brow  
As the oak-tree flower that tops the topmost bough,  
Ere it drop off before the perfect leaf ;  
And nothing save his name he had of grief,  
The name his mother, dying as he was born,  
Made out of sorrow in very sorrow's scorn,  
And set it on him smiling in her sight,  
Tristram ; who now, clothed with sweet youth and  
might,  
As a glad witness wore that bitter name,  
The second symbol of the world for fame.

## 16 THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

Famous and full of fortune was his youth  
Ere the beard's bloom had left his cheek unsmooth,  
And in his face a lordship of strong joy  
And height of heart no chance could curb or cloy  
Lightened, and all that warmed them at his eyes  
Loved them as larks that kindle as they rise  
Toward light they turn to music love the blue strong  
skies.

So like the morning through the morning moved  
Tristram, a light to look on and be loved.  
Song sprang between his lips and hands, and shone  
Singing, and strengthened and sank down thereon  
As a bird settles to the second flight,  
Then from beneath his harping hands with might  
Leapt, and made way and had its fill and died,  
And all whose hearts were fed upon it sighed  
Silent, and in them all the fire of tears  
Burned as wine drunken not with lips but ears.  
And gazing on his fervent hands that made  
The might of music all their souls obeyed  
With trembling strong subservience of delight  
Full many a maid that had him once in sight  
Thought in the secret rapture of her heart  
In how dark onset had these hands borne part  
How oft, and were so young and sweet of skill ;  
And those red lips whereon the song burned still,  
What words and cries of battle had they flung  
Athwart the swing and shriek of swords, so young ;  
And eyes as glad as summer, what strange youth  
Fed them so full of happy heart and truth,  
That had seen sway from side to sundering side  
The steel flow of that terrible springtide  
That the moon rules not, but the fire and light  
Of men's hearts mixed in the mid mirth of fight.

Therefore the joy and love of him they had  
Made thought more amorous in them and more  
glad  
For his fame's sake remembered, and his youth .  
Gave his fame flowerlike fragrance and soft growth  
As of a rose requickening, when he stood  
Fair in their eye, a flower of faultless blood.  
And that sad queen to whom his life was death,  
A rose plucked forth of summer in mid breath,  
A star fall'n out of season in mid throe  
Of that life's joy that makes the star's life glow,  
Made their love sadder toward him and more strong.  
And in mid change of time and fight and song  
Chance cast him westward on the low sweet strand  
Where songs are sung of the old green Irish land,  
And the sky loves it, and the sea loves best,  
And as a bird is taken to man's breast  
The sweet-souled land where sorrow sweetest sings  
Is wrapt round with them as with hands and wings  
And taken to the sea's heart as a flower.  
There in the luck and light of his good hour  
Came to the king's court like a noteless man  
Tristram, and while some half a season ran  
Abode before him harping in his hall,  
And taught sweet craft of new things musical  
To the dear maiden mouth and innocent hands  
That for his sake are famous in all lands.  
Yet was not love between them, for their fate  
Lay wrapt in its appointed hour at wait,  
And had no flower to show yet, and no sting.  
But once being vexed with some past wound the  
king  
Bade give him comfort of sweet baths, and then  
Should Iseult watch him as his handmaiden,

## 18 THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

For his more honour in men's sight, and ease  
The hurts he had with holy remedies  
Made by her mother's magic in strange hours  
Qut of live roots and life-compelling flowers.  
And finding by the wound's shape in his side  
This was the knight by whom their strength had died  
And all their might in one man overthrown  
Had left their shame in sight of all men shown,  
She would have slain him swordless with his sword :  
Yet seemed he to her so great and fair a lord  
She heaved up hand and smote not ; then said he,  
Laughing—‘ What comfort shall this dead man be,  
Damsel ? what hurt is for my blood to heal ?  
But set your hand not near the toothèd steel . . .  
Lest the fang strike it.’—‘ Yea, the fang,’ she said,  
‘ Should it not sting the very serpent dead  
That stung mine uncle ? for his slayer art thou,  
And half my mother's heart is bloodless now  
Through thee, that mad'st the veins of all her kin  
Bleed in his wounds whose veins through thee rar  
thin.’  
Yet thought she how their hot chief's violent heart  
Had flung the fierce word forth upon their part  
Which bade to battle the best knight that stood  
On Arthur's, and so dying of his wild mood  
Had set upon his conqueror's flesh the seal  
Of his mishallowed and anointed steel,  
Whereof the venom and enchanted might  
Made the sign burn here branded in her sight.  
These things she stood recasting, and her soul  
Subsiding till its wound of wrath were whole  
Grew smooth again, as thought still softening stole  
Through all its tempered passion ; nor might hate  
Keep high the fire against him lit of late ;

But softly from his smiling sight she passed.  
And peace thereafter made between them fast  
Made peace between two kingdoms, when he went  
Home with hands reconciled and heart content,  
To bring fair truce 'twixt Cornwall's wild bright  
strand  
And the long wrangling wars of that loud land.  
And when full peace was struck betwixt them twain  
Forth must he fare by those green straits again,  
And bring back Iseult for a plighted bride  
And set to reign at Mark his uncle's side.  
So now with feast made and all triumphs done  
They sailed between the moonfall and the sun  
Under the spent stars eastward ; but the queen  
Out of wise heart and subtle love had seen  
Such things as might be, dark as in a glass,  
And lest some doom of these should come to pass  
Bethought her with her secret soul alone  
To work some charm for marriage unison  
And strike the heart of Iseult to her lord  
With power compulsive more than stroke of sword.  
Therefore with marvellous herbs and spells she  
wrought  
To win the very wonder of her thought,  
And brewed it with her secret hands and blest  
And drew and gave out of her secret breast  
To one her chosen and Iseult's handmaiden,  
Brangwain, and bade her hide from sight of men  
This marvel covered in a golden cup,  
So covering in her heart the counsel up  
As in the gold the wondrous wine lay close ;  
And when the last shout with the last cup rose  
About the bride and bridegroom bound to bed,  
Then should this one word of her will be said

To her new-married maiden child, that she  
 Should drink with Mark this draught in unity,  
 And no lip touch it for her sake but theirs :  
 For with long love and consecrating prayers  
 The wine was hallowed for their mouths to pledge ;  
 And if a drop fell from the beaker's edge  
 That drop should Iseult hold as dear as blood  
 Shed from her mother's heart to do her good.  
 And having drunk they twain should be one heart  
 Who were one flesh till fleshly death should part—  
 Death, who parts all. So Brangwain swore, and  
 kept  
 The hid thing by her while she waked or slept.  
 And now they sat to see the sun again  
 Whose light of eye had looked on no such twain  
 Since Galahault in the rose-time of the year  
 Brought Launcelot first to sight of Guenevere.

And Tristram caught her changing eyes and said  
 "As this day raises daylight from the dead  
 Might not this face the life of a dead man ?"

And Iseult, gazing where the sea was wan  
 Out of the sun's way, said : "I pray you not  
 Praise me, but tell me there in Camelot,  
 Saving the queen, who hath most name of fair ?  
 I would I were a man and dwelling there,  
 That I might win me better praise than yours,  
 Even such as you have ; for your praise endures,  
 That with great deeds ye wring from mouths of  
 men,

But ours—for shame, where is it ? Tell me then,  
 Since woman may not wear a better here,  
 Who of this praise hath most save Guenevere ?"

And Tristram, lightening with a laugh held in—  
 "Surely a little praise is this to win,

A poor praise and a little ! but of these  
 Hapless, whom love serves only with bowed  
 knees,  
 Of such poor women fairer face hath none  
 That lifts her eyes alive against the sun  
 Than Arthur's sister, whom the north seas call  
 Mistress of isles ; so yet majestic  
 Above the crowns on younger heads she moves,  
 Outlightening with her eyes our late-born loves."

" Ah," said Iseult, " is she more tall than I ?  
 Look, I am tall ; " and struck the mast hard by,  
 With utmost upward reach of her bright hand ;  
 " And look, fair lord, now, when I rise and stand,  
 How high with feet unlifted I can touch  
 Standing straight up ; could this queen do thus  
 much ?

Nay, over tall she must be then, like me ;  
 Less fair than lesser women. May this be,  
 That still she stands the second stateliest there,  
 So more than many so much younger fair,  
 She, born when yet the king your lord was not,  
 And has the third knight after Launcelot  
 And after you to serve her ? nay, sir, then  
 God made her for a godlike sign to men."

" Ay," Tristram answered, " for a sign, a sign—  
 Would God it were not ! for no planets shine  
 With half such fearful forecast of men's fate  
 As a fair face so more unfortunate."

Then with a smile that lit not on her brows  
 But moved upon her red mouth tremulous  
 Light as a sea-bird's motion oversea,  
 " Yea," quoth Iseult, " the happier hap for me.  
 With no such face to bring men no such fate.  
 Yet her might all we women born too late

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Praise for good hap, who so enskied above  
Not more in age excels us than man's love."

There came a glooming light on Tristram's face  
Answering : " God keep you better in his grace  
Than to sit down beside her in men's sight.  
For if men be not blind whom God gives light  
And lie not in whose lips he bids truth live,  
Great grief shall she be given, and greater give.  
For Merlin witnessed of her years ago  
That she should work woe and should suffer woe  
Beyond the race of women : and in truth  
Her face, a spell that knows nor age nor youth,  
Like youth being soft, and subtler-eyed than age,  
With lips that mock the doom her eyes presage,  
Hath on it such a light of cloud and fire,  
With charm and change of keen or dim desire,  
And over all a fearless look of fear  
Hung like a veil across its changing cheer,  
Made up of fierce foreknowledge and sharp scorn,  
That it were better she had not been born.  
For not love's self can help a face which hath  
Such insubmissive anguish of wan wrath,  
Blind prescience and self-contemptuous hate  
Of her own soul and heavy-footed fate,  
Writ broad upon its beauty : none the less  
Its fire of bright and burning bitterness  
Takes with as quick a flame the sense of men  
As any sunbeam, nor is quenched again  
With any drop of dewfall ; yea, I think  
No herb of force or blood-compelling drink  
Would heal a heart that ever it made hot.  
Ay, and men too that greatly love her not,  
Seeing the great love of her and Lamoracke,  
Make no great marvel, nor look strangely back

When with his gaze about her she goes by  
 Pale as a breathless and star-quicken<sup>g</sup> sky  
 Between moonrise and sunset, and moves out  
 Clothed with the passion of his eyes about  
 As night with all her stars, yet night is black ;  
 And she, clothed warm with love of Lamoracke,  
 Girt with his worship as with girdling gold,  
 Seems all at heart anhungered and acold,  
 Seems sad at heart and loveless of the light,  
 As night, star-clothed or naked, is but night.”

And with her sweet eyes sunken, and the mirth  
 Dead in their look as earth lies dead in earth  
 That reigned on earth and triumphed, Iseult said :  
 “ Is it her shame of something done and dead  
 Or fear of something to be born and done  
 That so in her soul’s eye puts out the sun ? ”

And Tristram answered : “ Surely, as I think,  
 This gives her soul such bitterness to drink,  
 The sin born blind, the sightless sin unknown,  
 Wrought when the summer in her blood was blown  
 But scarce aflower, and spring first flushed her will  
 With bloom of dreams no fruitage should fulfil,  
 When out of vision and desire was wrought  
 The sudden sin that from the living thought  
 Leaps a live deed and dies not : then there came  
 On that blind sin swift eyesight like a flame  
 Touching the dark to death, and made her mad  
 With helpless knowledge that too late forbade  
 What was before the bidding : and she knew  
 How sore a life dead love should lead her through  
 To what sure end how fearful ; and though yet  
 Nor with her blood nor tears her way be wet  
 And she look bravely with set face on fate,  
 Yet she knows well the serpent hour at wait

Somewhere to sting and spare not ; ay, and he,  
Arthur" —

" The king," quoth Iseult suddenly,  
" Doth the king too live so in sight of fear ?  
They say sin touches not a man so near  
As shame a woman ; yet he too should be  
Part of the penance, being more deep than she  
Set in the sin."

" Nay," Tristram said, " for thus  
It fell by wicked hap and hazardous,  
That wittingly he sinned no more than youth  
May sin and be assoiled of God and truth,  
Repenting ; since in his first year of reign  
As he stood splendid with his foemen slain . . .  
And light of new-blown battles, flushed and hot  
With hope and life, came greeting from King Lot  
Out of his wind-worn islands oversea,  
And homage to my king and fealty  
Of those north seas wherein the strange shapes swim,  
As from his man ; and Arthur greeted him  
As his good lord and courteously, and bade  
To his high feast ; who coming with him had  
This Queen Morgause of Orkney, his fair wife,  
In the green middle Maytime of her life,  
And scarce in April was our king's as then,  
And goodliest was he of all flowering men,  
And of what graft as yet himself knew not ;  
But cold as rains in autumn was King Lot  
And grey-grown out of season : so there sprang  
Swift love between them, and all spring through sang  
Light in their joyous hearing ; for none knew  
The bitter bond of blood between them two,  
Twain fathers but one mother, till too late  
The sacred mouth of Merlin set forth fate

And brake the secret seal on Arthur's birth,  
 And showed his ruin and his rule on earth  
 Inextricable, and light on lives to be.  
 For surely, though time slay us, yet shall we  
 Have such high name and lordship of good days  
 As shall sustain us living, and men's praise  
 Shall burn a beacon lit above us dead.  
 And of the king how shall not this be said  
 When any of us from any mouth has praise,  
 That such were men in only this king's days,  
 In Arthur's? yea, come shine or shade, no less  
 His name shall be one name with knightliness,  
 His fame one light with sunlight. Yet in sooth  
 His age shall bear the burdens of his youth  
 And bleed from his own bloodshed; for indeed  
 Blind to him blind his sister brought forth seed,  
 And of the child between them shall be born  
 Destruction: so shall God not suffer scorn,  
 Nor in men's souls and lives his law lie dead."

And as one moved and marvelling Iseult said ·  
 "Great pity it is and strange it seems to me  
 God could not do them so much right as we,  
 Who slay not men for witless evil done;  
 And these the noblest under God's glad sun  
 For sin they knew not he that knew shall slay,  
 And smite blind men for stumbling in fair day.  
 What good is it to God that such should die?  
 Shall the sun's light grow sunnier in the sky  
 Because their light of spirit is clean put out?"

And sighing, she looked from wave to cloud about,  
 And even with that the full-grown feet of day  
 Sprang upright on the quivering water-way,  
 And his face burned against her meeting face  
 Most like a lover's thrilled with great love's grace

Whose glance takes fire and gives ; the quick sea  
shone

And shivered like spread wings of angels blown  
By the sun's breath before him ; and a low  
Sweet gale shook all the foam-flowers of thin snow  
As into rainfall of sea-roses shed  
Leaf by wild leaf on that green garden-bed  
Which tempests till and sea-winds turn and plough :  
For rosy and fiery round the running prow  
Fluttered the flakes and feathers of the spray,  
And bloomed like blossoms cast by God away  
To waste on the ardent water ; swift the moon  
Withered to westward as a face in swoon  
Death-stricken by glad tidings : and the height  
Throbbed and the centre quivered with delight  
And the depth quailed with passion as of love,  
Till like the heart of some new-mated dove  
Air, light, and wave seemed full of burning rest,  
With motion as of one God's beating breast.

And her heart sprang in Iseult, and she drew  
With all her spirit and life the sunrise through,  
And through her lips the keen triumphant air  
Sea-scented, sweeter than land-roses were,  
And through her eyes the whole rejoicing east  
Sun-satisfied, and all the heaven at feast  
Spread for the morning ; and the imperious mirth  
Of wind and light that moved upon the earth,  
Making the spring, and all the fruitful might  
And strong regeneration of delight  
That swells the seedling leaf and sapling man,  
Since the first life in the first world began  
To burn and burgeon through void limbs and veins,  
And the first love with sharp sweet procreant pains

To pierce and bring forth roses ; yea, she felt  
Through her own soul the sovereign morning melt,  
And all the sacred passion of the sun ;  
And as the young clouds flamed and were undone  
About him coming, touched and burnt away  
In rosy ruin and yellow spoil of day,  
The sweet veil of her body and corporal sense  
Felt the dawn also cleave it, and incense  
With light from inward and with effluent heat  
The kindling soul through fleshly hands and feet.  
And as the august great blossom of the dawn  
Burst, and the full sun scarce from sea withdrawn  
Seemed on the fiery water a flower afloat,  
So as a fire the mighty morning smote  
Throughout her, and incensed with the influent hour  
Her whole soul's one great mystical red flower  
Burst, and the bud of her sweet spirit broke  
Rose-fashion, and the strong spring at a stroke  
Thrilled, and was cloven, and from the full sheath  
came  
The whole rose of the woman red as flame :  
And all her Mayday blood as from a swoon  
Flushed, and May rose up in her and was June.  
So for a space her heart as heavenward burned :  
Then with half summer in her eyes she turned,  
And on her lips was April yet, and smiled,  
As though the spirit and sense unreconciled  
Shrank laughing back, and would not ere its hour  
Let life put forth the irrevocable flower.

And the soft speech between them grew again  
With questionings and records of what men  
Rose mightiest, and what names for love or fight  
Shone starriest overhead of queen or knight.

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There Tristram spake of many a noble thing,  
High feast and storm of tourney round the king,  
Strange quest by perilous lands of marsh and brake  
And circling woods branch-knotted like a snake  
And places pale with sins that they had seen,  
Where was no life of red fruit or of green  
But all was as a dead face wan and dun ;  
And bowers of evil builders whence the sun  
Turns silent, and the moon holds hardly light  
Above them through the sick and star-crossed night ;  
And of their hands through whom such holds lay  
waste,  
And all their strengths dishevelled and defaced  
Fell ruinous, and were not from north to south :  
And of the might of Merlin's ancient mouth,  
The son of no man's loins, begot by doom  
In speechless sleep out of a spotless womb ;  
For sleeping among graves where none had rest  
And ominous houses of dead bones unblest  
Among the grey grass rough as old rent hair  
And wicked herbage whitening like despair  
And blown upon with blasts of dolorous breath  
From gaunt rare gaps and hollow doors of death,  
A maid unspotted, senseless of the spell,  
Felt not about her breathe some thing of hell  
Whose child and hers was Merlin ; and to him  
Great light from God gave sight of all things dim  
And wisdom of all wondrous things, to say  
What root should bear what fruit of night or day,  
And sovereign speech and counsel higher than man ;  
Wherefore his youth like age was wise and wan,  
And his age sorrowful and fain to sleep ;  
Yet should sleep never, neither laugh nor weep,

Till in some depth of deep sweet land or sea  
The heavenly hands of holier Nimue,  
That was the nurse of Launcelot, and most sweet  
Of all that move with magical soft feet  
Among us, being of lovelier blood and breath,  
Should shut him in with sleep as kind as death :  
For she could pass between the quick and dead :  
And of her love toward Pelleas, for whose head  
Love-wounded and world-wearied she had won  
A place beyond all pain in Avalon ;  
And of the fire that wasted afterward  
The loveless eyes and bosom of Ettarde,  
In whose false love his faultless heart had burned ;  
And now being rapt from her, her lost heart  
yearned  
To seek him, and passed hungering out of life :  
And after all the thunder-hours of strife  
That roared between King Claudas and King Ban  
How Nimue's mighty nursling waxed to man,  
And how from his first field such grace he got  
That all men's hearts bowed down to Launcelot,  
And how the high prince Galahault held him dear  
And led him even to love of Guenevere  
And to that kiss which made break forth as fire  
The laugh that was the flower of his desire,  
The laugh that lightened at her lips for bliss  
To win from Love so great a lover's kiss :  
And of the toil of Balen all his days  
To reap but thorns for fruit and tears for praise,  
Whose hap was evil as his heart was good,  
And all his works and ways by wold and wood  
Led through much pain to one last labouring day  
When blood for tears washed grief with life away :

## 30 THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

And of the kin of Arthur, and their might ;  
The misborn head of Mordred, sad as night,  
With cold waste cheeks and eyes as keen as pain,  
And the close angry lips of Agravaine ;  
And gracious Gawajn, scattering words as flowers,  
The kindest head of worldly paramours ;  
And the fair hand of Gareth, found in fight  
Strong as a sea-beast's tushes and as white ;  
And of the king's self, glorious yet and glad  
For all the toil and doubt of doom he had,  
Clothed with men's loves and full of kingly days.

Then Iseult said : " Let each knight have his praise  
And each good man good witness of his worth ;  
But when men laud the second name on earth,  
Whom would they praise to have no worldly peer  
Save him whose love makes glorious Guenevere ? "

" Nay," Tristram said, " such man as he is none."

" What," said she, " there is none such under sun  
Of all the large earth's living ? yet I deemed  
Men spake of one—but maybe men that dreamed,  
Fools and tongue-stricken, witless, babbler's breed—  
That for all high things was his peer indeed  
Save this one highest, to be so loved and love."

And Tristram : " Little wit had these thereof ;  
For there is none such in the world as this."

" Ay, upon land," quoth Iseult, " none such is,  
I doubt not, nor where fighting folk may be ;  
But were there none such between sky and sea,  
The world's whole worth were poorer than I wist."

And Tristram took her flower-white hand and  
kissed,  
Laughing ; and through his fair face as in shame  
The light blood lightened. " Hear they no such  
name ? "

She said ; and he, " If there be such a word,  
 I wot the queen's poor harper hath not heard."  
 Then, as the fuller-feathered hours grew long,  
 He holp to speed their warm slow feet with song.

" Love, is it morning risen or night deceased  
 That makes the mirth of this triumphant east ?  
 Is it bliss given or bitterness put by  
 That makes most glad men's hearts at love's high feast ;  
 Grief smiles, joy weeps, that day should live and die.

" Is it with soul's thirst or with body's drouth  
 That summer yearns out sunward to the south,  
 With all the flowers that when thy birth drew nigh  
 Were molten in one rose to make thy mouth ?  
 • O love, what care though day should live and die ?

" Is the sun glad of all the love on earth,  
 The spirit and sense and work of things and worth ?  
 Is the moon sad because the month must fly  
 And bring her death that can but bring back birth ?  
 For all these things as day must live and die.

" Love, is it day that makes thee thy delight  
 Or thou that seest day made out of thy light ?  
 Love, as the sun and sea are thou and I,  
 Sea without sun dark, sun without sea bright ;  
 The sun is one though day should live and die.

" O which is elder, night or light, who knows ?  
 And life or love, which first of these twain grows ?  
 For life is born of love to wail and cry,  
 And love is born of life to heal his woes,  
 And light of night, that day should live and die.

" O sun of heaven above the worldly sea,  
 O very love, what light is this of thee !  
 My sea of soul is deep as thou art high,  
 But all thy light is shed through all of me,  
 As love's through love, while day shall live and die.

## 32 THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

“ Nay,” said Iseult, “ your song is hard to read.”

“ Ay ? ” said he : “ or too light a song to heed,  
Too slight to follow, it may be ? Who shall sing  
Of love but as a churl before a king  
If by love’s worth men rate his worthiness ?  
Yet as the poor churl’s worth to sing is less,  
Surely the more shall be the great king’s grace  
To show for churlish love a kindlier face.”

“ No churl,” she said, “ but one in soothsayer’s  
wise

Who tells but truths that help no more than lies.  
I have heard men sing of love a simpler way  
Than these wrought riddles made of night and  
day,  
Like jewelled reins whereon the rhyme-bells hang.”

And Tristram smiled and changed his song and  
sang.

“ The breath between my lips of lips not mine,  
Like spirit in sense that makes pure sense divine,  
Is as life in them from the living sky  
That entering fills my heart with blood of thine  
And thee with me, while day shall live and die.

“ Thy soul is shed into me with thy breath,  
And in my heart each heartbeat of thee saith  
How in thy life the lifesprings of me lie,  
Even one life to be gathered of one death  
In me and thee, though day may live and die.

“ Ah, who knows now if in my veins it be  
My blood that feels life sweet, or blood of thee,  
And this thine eyesight kindled in mine eye  
That shows me in thy flesh the soul of me,  
For thine made mine, while day may live and die ?

“ Ah, who knows yet if one be twain or one,  
 And sunlight separable again from sun,  
 And I from thee with all my lifesprings dry,  
 And thou from me with all thine heartbeats done,  
 Dead separate souls while day shall live and die ?

“ I see my soul within thine eyes, and hear  
 My spirit in all thy pulses thrill with fear,  
 And in my lips the passion of thee sigh,  
 And music of me made in mine own ear ;  
 Am I not thou while day shall live and die ?

“ Art thou not I as I thy love am thou ?  
 So let all things pass from us ; we are now,  
 For all that was and will be, who knows why ?  
 And all that is and is not, who knows how ?  
 Who knows ? God knows why day should live and die.”

And Iseult mused and spake no word, but sought  
 Through all the hushed ways of her tongueless  
 thought

What face or covered likeness of a face  
 In what veiled hour or dream-determined place  
 She seeing might take for love’s face, and believe  
 This was the spirit to whom all spirits cleave.  
 For that sweet wonder of the twain made one  
 And each one twain, incorporate sun with sun,  
 Star with star molten, soul with soul imbued,  
 And all the soul’s works, all their multitude,  
 Made one thought and one vision and one song,  
 Love—this thing, this, laid hand on her so strong  
 She could not choose but yearn till she should see.  
 So went she musing down her thoughts ; but he,  
 Sweet-hearted as a bird that takes the sun  
 With clear strong eyes and feels the glad god run

## 34 THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW

Bright through his blood and wide rejoicing wings,  
And opens all himself to heaven and sings,  
Made her mind light and full of noble mirth  
With words and songs the gladdest grown on earth,  
Till she was blithe and high of heart as he.  
So swam the Swallow through the springing sea

And while they sat at speech as at a feast,  
Came a light wind fast hardening forth of the east  
And blackening till its might had marred the skies ;  
And the sea thrilled as with heart-sundering sighs  
One after one drawn, with each breath it drew,  
And the green hardened into iron blue,  
And the soft light went out of all its face.

Then Tristram girt him for an oarsman's place  
And took his oar and smote, and toiled with might  
In the east wind's full face and the strong sea's spite  
Labouring ; and all the rowers rowed hard, but he  
More mightily than any wearier three.

And Iseult watched him rowing with sinless eyes  
That loved him but in holy girlish wise  
For noble joy in his fair manliness  
And trust and tender wonder ; none the less  
She thought if God had given her grace to be  
Man, and make war on danger of earth and sea,  
Even such a man she would be ; for his stroke  
Was mightiest as the mightier water broke,  
And in sheer measure like strong music drove  
Clean through the wet weight of the wallowing  
wave ;

And as a tune before a great king played  
For triumph was the tune their strong strokes made,  
And sped the ship through with smooth strife of  
oars  
Over the mid sea's grey foam-paven floors,

For all the loud breach of the waves at will.  
So for an hour they fought the storm out still,  
And the shorn foam spun from the blades, and high  
The keel sprang from the wave-ridge, and the sky  
Glared at them for a breath's space through the  
rain ;

Then the bows with a sharp shock plunged again  
Down, and the sea clashed on them, and so rose  
The bright stem like one panting from swift blows,  
And as a swimmer's joyous beaten head  
Rears itself laughing, so in that sharp stead  
The light ship lifted her long quivering bows  
As might the man his buffeted strong brows  
Out of the wave-breach ; for with one stroke yet  
Went all men's oars together, strongly set  
As to loud music, and with hearts uplift  
They smote their strong way through the drench and  
drift :

Till the keen hour had chafed itself to death  
And the east wind fell fitfully, breath by breath,  
Tired ; and across the thin and slackening rain  
Sprang the face southward of the sun again.  
Then all they rested and were eased at heart ;  
And Iseult rose up where she sat apart,  
And with her sweet soul deepening her deep eyes  
Cast the furs from her and subtle embroideries  
That wrapped her from the storming rain and  
spray,  
And shining like all April in one day,  
Hair, face, and throat dashed with the straying  
showers,  
She stood the first of all the whole world's flowers,  
And laughed on Tristram with her eyes, and said,  
"I too have heart then, I was not afraid."

And answering some light courteous word of grace  
 He saw her clear face lighten on his face  
 Unwittingly, with unenamoured eyes,  
 For the last time. A live man in such wise  
 Looks in the deadly face of his fixed hour  
 And laughs with lips wherein he hath no power  
 To keep the life yet some five minutes' space.  
 So Tristram looked on Iseult face to face  
 And knew not, and she knew not. The last time—  
 The last that should be told in any rhyme  
 Heard anywhere on mouths of singing men  
 That ever should sing praise of them again ;  
 The last hour of their hurtless hearts at rest,  
 The last that peace should touch them, breast to  
 breast,  
 The last that sorrow far from them should sit,  
 This last was with them, and they knew not it.

For Tristram being athirst with toil now spake,  
 Saying, “ Iseult, for all dear love’s labour’s sake  
 Give me to drink, and give me for a pledge  
 The touch of four lips on the beaker’s edge.”  
 And Iseult sought and would not wake Brangwain  
 Who slept as one half dead with fear and pain,  
 Being tender-natured ; so with hushed light feet  
 Went Iseult round her, with soft looks and sweet  
 Pitying her pain ; so sweet a spirited thing  
 She was, and daughter of a kindly king.  
 And spying what strange bright secret charge was  
 kept  
 Fast in that maid’s white bosom while she slept,  
 She sought and drew the gold cup forth and smiled  
 Marvelling, with such light wonder as a child  
 That hears of glad sad life in magic lands ;  
 And bare it back to Tristram with pure hands

Holding the love-draught that should be for flame  
To burn out of them fear and faith and shame,  
And lighten all their life up in men's sight,  
And make them sad for ever. Then the knight  
Bowed toward her and craved whence had she this  
strange thing

That might be spoil of some dim Asian king,  
By starlight stolen from some waste place of sands,  
And a maid bore it here in harmless hands.  
And Iseult, laughing—“ Other lords that be  
Feast, and their men feast after them ; but we,  
Our men must keep the best wine back to feast  
Till they be full and we of all men least  
Feed after them and fain to fare so well :  
So with mine handmaid and your squire it fell  
That hid this bright thing from us in a wile :”  
And with light lips yet full of their swift smile,  
And hands that wist not though they dug a  
grave,

Undid the hasps of gold, and drank, and gave,  
And he drank after, a deep glad kingly draught :  
And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed  
Death ; if it be death so to drink, and fare  
As men who change and are what these twain  
were.

And shuddering with eyes full of fear and fire  
And heart-stung with a serpentine desire  
He turned and saw the terror in her eyes  
That yearned upon him shining in such wise  
As a star midway in the midnight fixed.

Their Galahault was the cup, and she that  
mixed ;  
Nor other hand there needed, nor sweet speech  
To lure their lips together ; each on each

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Hung with strange eyes and hovered as a bird  
Wounded, and each mouth trembled for a word ;  
Their heads neared, and their hands were drawn in  
one,

And they saw dark, though still the unsunken sun  
Far through fine rain shot fire into the south ;  
And their four lips became one burning mouth.

## THE QUEEN'S PLEASANCE

OUT of the night arose the second day,  
 And saw the ship's bows break the shoreward spray.  
 As the sun's boat of gold and fire began  
 To sail the sea of heaven unsailed of man,  
 And the soft waves of sacred air to break  
 Round the prow launched into the morning's lake,  
 They saw the sign of their sea-travel done.

Ah, was not something seen of yester-sun,  
 When the sweet light that lightened all the skies  
 Saw nothing fairer than one maiden's eyes,  
 That whatsoever in all time's years may be  
 To-day's sun nor to-morrow's sun shall see ?  
 Not while she lives, not when she comes to die,  
 Shall she look sunward with that sinless eye.

Yet fairer now than song may show them stand  
 Tristram and Iseult, hand in amorous hand,  
 Soul-satisfied, their eyes made great and bright  
 With all the love of all the livelong night ;  
 With all its hours yet singing in their ears  
 No mortal music made of thoughts and tears,  
 But such a song, past conscience of man's thought,  
 As hearing he grows god and knows it not,

Nought else they saw nor heard but what the  
night

Had left for seal upon their sense and sight,  
Sound of past pulses beating, fire of amorous light  
Enough, and overmuch, and never yet  
Enough, though love still hungering feed and fret,  
To fill the cup of night which dawn must overset.  
For still their eyes were dimmer than with tears  
And dizzier from diviner sounds their ears  
Than though from choral thunders of the quiring  
spheres.

They heard not how the landward waters rang,  
Nor saw where high into the morning sprang,  
Riven from the shore and bastioned with the sea,  
Toward summits where the north wind's nest might  
be,

A wave-walled palace with its eastern gate  
Full of the sunrise now and wide at wait,  
And on the mighty-moulded stairs that climb  
Sheer from the fierce lip of the lapping foam  
The knights of Mark that stood before the wall.  
So with loud joy and storm of festival  
They brought the bride in up the towery way  
That rose against the rising front of day,  
Stair based on stair, between the rocks unhewn,  
To those strange halls wherethrough the tidal tune  
Rang loud or lower from soft or strengthening sea,  
Tower shouldering tower, to windward and to lee,  
With change of floors and stories, flight on flight,  
That climb and curled up to the crowning height  
Whence men might see wide east and west in one  
And on one sea waned moon and mounting sun.  
And severed from the sea-rock's base, where stand  
Some worn walls yet they saw the broken strand,

The beachless cliff that in the sheer sea dips,  
The sleepless shore inexorable to ships,  
And the straight causeway's bare gaunt spine between  
The sea-spanned walls and naked mainland's green.

On the mid stairs, between the light and dark,  
Before the main tower's portal stood King Mark,  
Crowned : and his face was as the face of one  
Long time athirst and hungering for the sun  
In barren thrall of bitter bonds, who now  
Thinks here to feel its blessing on his brow.  
A swart lean man, but kinglike, still of guise,  
With black streaked beard and cold unquiet eyes,  
Close-mouthed, gaunt-cheeked, wan as a morning  
moon,

Though hardly time on his worn hair had strewn  
The thin first ashes from a sparing hand :  
Yet little fire there burnt upon the brand,  
And way-worn seemed he with life's wayfaring.  
So between shade and sunlight stood the king,  
And his face changed nor yearned not toward his  
bride ;

But fixed between mild hope and patient pride  
Abode what gift of rare or lesser worth  
This day might bring to all his days on earth.  
But at the glory of her when she came  
His heart endured not : very fear and shame  
Smote him, to take her by the hand and kiss,  
Till both were molten in the burning bliss,  
And with a thin flame flushing his cold face  
He led her silent to the bridal place.

There were they wed and hallowed of the priest ;  
And all the loud time of the marriage feast  
One thought within three hearts was as a fire,  
Where craft and faith took counsel with desire.

For when the feast had made a glorious end  
They gave the new queen for her maids to tend  
At dawn of bride-night, and thereafter bring  
With marriage music to the bridegroom king.  
Then by device of craft between them laid  
To him went Brangwain delicately, and prayed  
That this thing even for love's sake might not be,  
But without sound or light or eye to see  
She might come in to bride-bed : and he laughed,  
As one that wist not well of wise love's craft,  
And bade all bridal things be as she would.  
Yet of his gentleness he gat not good ;  
For clothed and covered with the nuptial dark  
Soft like a bride came Brangwain to King Mark,  
And to the queen came Tristram ; and the night  
Fled, and ere danger of detective light  
From the king sleeping Brangwain slid away,  
And where had lain her handmaid Iseult lay.  
And the king waking saw beside his head  
That face yet passion-coloured, amorous red  
From lips not his, and all that strange hair shed  
Across the tissued pillows, fold on fold,  
Innumerable, incomparable, all gold,  
To fire men's eyes with wonder, and with love  
Men's hearts ; so shone its flowering crown above  
The brows enwound with that imperial wreath,  
And framed with fragrant radiance round the face  
beneath.

And the king marvelled, seeing with sudden start  
Her very glory, and said out of his heart ;  
" What have I done of good for God to bless  
That all this he should give me, tress on tress,  
All this great wealth and wondrous ? Was it this  
That in mine arms I had all night to kiss,

And mix with me this beauty ? this that seems  
More fair than heaven doth in some tired saint's  
dreams,

Being part of that same heaven ? yea, more, for he,  
Though loved of God so, yet but seems to see,  
But to me sinful such great grace is given  
That in mine hands I hold this part of heaven,  
Not to mine eyes lent merely. Doth God make  
Such things so godlike for man's mortal sake ?  
Have I not sinned, that in this fleshly life  
Have made of her a mere man's very wife ? "

So the king mused and murmured ; and she  
heard

The faint sound trembling of each breathless word,  
And laughed into the covering of her hair.

And many a day for many a month as fair  
Slid over them like music ; and as bright  
Burned with love's offerings many a secret night.  
And many a dawn to many a fiery noon  
Blew prelude, when the horn's heart-kindling tune  
Lit the live woods with sovereign sound of mirth  
Before the mightiest huntsman hailed on earth  
Lord of its lordliest pleasure, where he rode  
Hard by her rein whose peerless presence glowed  
Not as that white queen's of the virgin hunt  
Once, whose crown-crescent braves the night-wind's  
brunt,

But with the sun for frontlet of a queenlier front.  
For where the flashing of her face was turned  
As lightning was the fiery light that burned  
From eyes and brows enkindled more with speed  
And rapture of the rushing of her steed  
Than once with only beauty ; and her mouth  
Was as a rose athirst that pants for drouth

Even while it laughs for pleasure of desire,  
And all her heart was as a leaping fire.  
Yet once more joy they took of woodland ways  
Than came of all those flushed and fiery days  
When the loud air was mad with life and sound,  
Through many a dense green mile, of horn and hound  
Before the king's hunt going along the wind,  
And ere the timely leaves were changed or thinned,  
Even in mid maze of summer. For the knight  
Forth was once ridden toward some frontier fight  
Against the lewd folk of the Christless lands  
That warred with wild and intermittent hands  
Against the king's north border ; and there came  
A knight unchristened yet of unknown name, '—  
Swart Palamede, upon a secret quest,  
To high Tintagel, and abode as guest  
In likeness of a minstrel with the king.  
Nor was there man could sound so sweet a string,  
Save Tristram only, of all held best on earth.  
And one loud eve, being full of wine and mirth,  
Ere sunset left the walls and waters dark,  
To that strange minstrel strongly swore King Mark,  
By all that makes a knight's faith firm and strong,  
That he for guerdon of his harp and song  
Might crave and have his liking. Straight there came  
Up the swart cheek a flash of swarthier flame,  
And the deep eyes fulfilled of glittering night  
Laughed out in lightnings of triumphant light  
As the grim harper spake : " O king, I crave  
No gift of man that king may give to slave,  
But this thy crowned queen only, this thy wife,  
Whom yet unseen I loved, and set my life  
On this poor chance to compass, even as here,  
Being fairer famed than all save Guenevere."

Then as the noise of seaward storm that mocks  
With roaring laughter from reverberate rocks  
The cry from ships near shipwreck, harsh and high  
Rose all the wrath and wonder in one cry  
Through all the long roof's hollow depth and length  
That hearts of strong men kindled in their strength  
May speak in laughter lion-like, and cease,  
Being wearied : only two men held their peace  
And each glared hard on other : but King Mark  
Spake first of these : " Man, though thy craft be dark  
And thy mind evil that begat this thing,  
Yet stands the word once plighted of a king  
Fast : and albeit less evil it were for me  
To give my life up than my wife, or be  
A landless man crowned only with a curse,  
Yet this in God's and all men's sight were worse,  
To live soul-shamed, a man of broken troth,  
Abhorred of men as I abhor mine oath  
Which yet I may forswear not." And he bowed  
His head, and wept : and all men wept aloud,  
Save one, that heard him weeping : but the queen  
Wept not : and statelier yet than eyes had seen  
That ever looked upon her queenly state  
She rose, and in her eyes her heart was great  
And full of wrath seen manifest and scorn  
More strong than anguish to go thence forlorn  
Of all men's comfort and her natural right.  
And they went forth into the dawn of night.  
Long by wild ways and clouded light they rode,  
Silent ; and fear less keen at heart abode  
With Iseult than with Palamede : for awe  
Constrained him, and the might of love's high law,  
That can make lewd men loyal ; and his heart  
Yearned on her, if perchance with amorous art

And soothfast skill of very love he might  
For courtesy find favour in her sight  
And comfort of her mercies : for he wist  
More grace might come of that sweet mouth unkissed  
Than joy for violence done it, that should make  
His name abhorred for shame's disloyal sake.  
And in the stormy starlight clouds were thinned  
And thickened by short gusts of changing wind  
That panted like a sick man's fitful breath :  
And like a moan of lions hurt to death  
Came the sea's hollow noise along the night.  
But ere its gloom from aught but foam had light  
They halted, being aweary : and the knight  
As reverently forbore her where she lay  
As one that watched his sister's sleep till day.  
Nor durst he kiss or touch her hand or hair  
For love and shamefast pity, seeing how fair  
She slept, and fenceless from the fitful air.  
And shame at heart stung nigh to death desire,  
But grief at heart burned in him like a fire  
For hers and his own sorrowing sake, that had  
Such grace for guerdon as makes glad men sad,  
To have their will and want it. And the day  
Sprang : and afar along the wild waste way  
They heard the pulse and press of hurrying horse  
hoofs play :  
And like the rushing of a ravenous flame  
Whose wings make tempest of the darkness, came  
Upon them headlong as in thunder borne  
Forth of the darkness of the labouring morn  
Tristram : and up forthright upon his steed  
Leapt, as one blithe of battle, Palamede,  
And mightily with shock of horse and man  
They lashed together : and fair that fight began

As fair came up that sunrise : to and fro,  
With knees nigh staggered and stout heads bent low  
From each quick shock of spears on either side,  
Reeled the strong steeds heavily, haggard-eyed  
And heartened high with passion of their pride  
As sheer the stout spears shocked again, and flew  
Sharp-splintering : then, his sword as each knight  
drew,  
They flashed and foined full royally, so long  
That but to see so fair a strife and strong  
A man might well have given out of his life  
One year's void space forlorn of love or strife.  
As when a bright north-easter, great of heart,  
Scattering the strengths of squadrons, hurls apart  
Ship from ship labouring violently, in such toil  
As earns but ruin—with even so strong recoil  
Back were the steeds hurled from the spear-shock,  
fain  
And foiled of triumph : then with tightened rein  
And stroke of spur, inveterate, either knight  
Bore in again upon his foe with might,  
Heart-hungry for the hot-mouthed feast of fight  
And all athirst of mastery : but full soon  
The jarring notes of that tempestuous tune  
Fell, and its mighty music made of hands  
Contending, clamorous through the loud waste lands,  
Broke at once off ; and shattered from his steed  
Fell, as a mainmast ruining, Palamede,  
Stunned : and those lovers left him where he lay,  
And lightly through green lawns they rode away.  
There was a bower beyond man's eye more fair  
Than ever summer dews and sunniest air  
Fed full with rest and radiance till the boughs  
Had wrought a roof as for a holier house

Than aught save love might breathe in ; fairer far  
Than keeps the sweet light back of moon and star  
From high kings' chambers : there might love and sleep  
Divide for joy the darkling hours, and keep  
With amorous alternation of sweet strife  
The soft and secret ways of death and life  
Made smooth for pleasure's feet to rest and run  
Even from the moondawn to the kindling sun,  
Made bright for passion's feet to run and rest  
Between the midnight's and the morning's breast,  
Where hardly though her happy head lie down  
It may forget the hour that wove its crown ;  
Where hardly though her joyous limbs be laid  
They may forget the mirth that midnight made.  
And thither, ere sweet night had slain sweet day,  
Iseult and Tristram took their wandering way,  
And rested, and refreshed their hearts with cheer  
In hunters' fashion of the woods ; and here  
More sweet it seemed, while this might be, to dwell  
And take of all world's weariness farewell  
Than reign of all world's lordship queen and king.  
Nor here would time for three moons' changes bring  
Sorrow nor thought of sorrow ; but sweet earth  
Fostered them like her babes of eldest birth,  
Reared warm in pathless woods and cherished well.  
And the sun sprang above the sea and fell,  
And the stars rose and sank upon the sea ;  
And outlaw-like, in forest wise and free,  
The rising and the setting of their lights  
Found those twain dwelling all those days and nights.  
And under change of sun and star and moon  
Flourished and fell the chaplets woven of June,  
And fair through fervours of the deepening sky  
Panted and passed the hours that lit July,

And each day blessed them out of heaven above,  
And each night crowned them with the crown of love.  
Nor till the might of August overhead  
Weighed on the world was yet one roseleaf shed  
Of all their joy's warm coronal, nor aught  
Touched them in passing ever with a thought  
That ever this might end on any day  
Or any night not love them where they lay ;  
But like a babbling tale of barren breath  
Seemed all report and rumour held of death,  
And a false bruit the legend tear impeared  
That such a thing as change was in the world.  
And each bright song upon his lips that came,  
Mocking the powers of change and death by name,  
Blasphemed their bitter godhead, and defied  
Time, though clothed round with ruin as kings with  
pride,  
To blot the glad life out of love : and she  
Drank lightly deep of his philosophy  
In that warm wine of amorous words which is  
Sweet with all truths of all philosophies.  
For well he wist all subtle ways of song,  
And in his soul the secret eye was strong  
That burns in meditation, till bright words  
Break flamelike forth as notes from fledgeling birds  
That feel the soul speak through them of the spring.  
So fared they night and day as queen and king  
Crowned of a kingdom wide as day and night.  
Nor ever cloudlet swept or swam in sight  
Across the darkling depths of their delight  
Whose stars no skill might number, nor man's art  
Sound the deep stories of its heavenly heart.  
Till, even for wonder that such life should live,  
Desires and dreams of what death's self might give

Would touch with tears and laughter and wild speech  
The lips and eyes of passion, fain to reach,  
Beyond all bourne of time or trembling sense,  
The verge of love's last possible eminence.  
Out of the heaven that storm nor shadow mars,  
Deep from the starry depth beyond the stars,  
A yearning ardour without scope or name  
Fell on them, and the bright night's breath of flame  
Shot fire into their kisses ; and like fire  
The lit dews lightened on the leaves, as higher  
Night's heart beat on toward midnight. Far and fain  
Somewhiles the soft rush of rejoicing rain  
Solaced the darkness, and from steep to steep  
Of heaven they saw the sweet sheet lightning leap  
And laugh its heart out in a thousand smiles,  
When the clear sea for miles on glimmering miles  
Burned as though dawn were strewn abroad astray,  
Or, showering out of heaven, all heaven's array  
Had paven instead the waters : fain and far  
Somewhiles the burning love of star for star  
Spake words that love might wellnigh seem to hear  
In such deep hours as turn delight to fear  
Sweet as delight's self ever. So they lay  
Tranced once, nor watched along the fiery bay  
The shine of summer darkness palpitate and play.  
She had nor sight nor voice ; her swooning eyes  
Knew not if night or light were in the skies ;  
Across her beauty sheer the moondawn shed  
Its light as on a thing as white and dead ;  
Only with stress of soft fierce hands she prest  
Between the throbbing blossoms of her breast  
His ardent face, and through his hair her breath  
Went quivering as when life is hard on death ;  
And with strong trembling fingers she strained fast  
His head into her bosom ; till at last.

Satiate with sweetness of that burning bed,  
 His eyes afire with tears, he raised his head  
 And laughed into her lips ; and all his heart  
 Filled hers ; then face from face fell, and apart  
 Each hung on each with panting lips, and felt  
 Sense into sense and spirit in spirit melt.

“Hast thou no sword ? I would not live till day ,  
 O love, this night and we must pass away,  
 It must die soon, and let not us die late.”

“Take then my sword and slay me ; nay, but wait  
 Till day be risen ; what, wouldest thou think to die  
 Before the light take hold upon the sky ? ”

“Yea, love ; for how shall we have twice, being  
 twain,

This very night of love's most rapturous reign ?  
 Live thou and have thy day, and year by year  
 Be great, but what shall I be ? Slay me here ;  
 Let me die not when love lies dead, but now  
 Strike through my heart : nay, sweet, what heart hast  
 thou ?

Is it so much I ask thee, and spend my breath  
 In asking ? nay, thou knowest it is but death.  
 Hadst thou true heart to love me, thou wouldest give  
 This : but for hate's sake thou wilt let me live.”

Here he caught up her lips with his, and made  
 The wild prayer silent in her heart that prayed,  
 And strained her to him till all her faint breath  
 sank

And her bright light limbs palpitated and shrank  
 And rose and fluctuated as flowers in rain  
 That bends them and they tremble and rise again  
 And heave and straighten and quiver all through with  
 bliss

And turn afresh their mouths up for a kiss,

Amorous, athirst of that sweet influent love ;  
So, hungering towards his hovering lips above,  
Her red-rose mouth yearned silent, and her eyes  
Closed, and flashed after, as through June's darkest  
skies

The divine heartbeats of the deep live light  
Make open and shut the gates of the outer night.

Long lay they still, subdued with love, nor knew  
If cloud or light changed colour as it grew,  
If star or moon beheld them ; if above  
The heaven of night waxed fiery with their love,  
Or earth beneath were moved at heart and root  
To burn as they, to burn and bring forth fruit  
Unseasonable for love's sake ; if tall trees  
Bowed, and close flowers yearned open, and the  
breeze

Failed and fell silent as a flame that fails :  
And all that hour unheard the nightingales  
Clamoured, and all the woodland soul was stirred,  
And depth and height were one great song unheard,  
As though the world caught music and took fire  
From the instant heart alone of their desire.

So sped their night of nights between them : so,  
For all fears past and shadows, shine and snow,  
That one pure hour all-golden where they lay  
Made their life perfect and their darkness day.  
And warmer waved its harvest yet to reap,  
Till in the lovely fight of love and sleep  
At length had sleep the mastery ; and the dark  
Was lit with soft live gleams they might not mark,  
Fleet butterflies, each like a dead flower's ghost,  
White, blue, and sere leaf-coloured ; but the most  
White as the sparkle of snow-flowers in the sun  
Ere with his breath they lie at noon undone

Whose kiss devours their tender beauty, and leaves  
But raindrops on the grass and sere thin leaves  
That were engraven with traceries of the snow  
Flowerwise ere any flower of earth's would blow ;  
So swift they sprang and sank, so sweet and light  
They swam the deep dim breathless air of night.  
Now on her rose-white amorous breast half bare,  
Now on her slumberous love-dishevelled hair,  
The white wings lit and vanished, and afresh  
Lit soft as snow lights on her snow-soft flesh,  
On hand or throat or shoulder ; and she stirred  
Sleeping, and spake some tremulous bright word,  
And laughed upon some dream too sweet for truth,  
Yet not so sweet as very love and youth  
That there had charmed her eyes to sleep at last.  
Nor woke they till the perfect night was past,  
And the soft sea thrilled with blind hope of light.  
But ere the dusk had well the sun in sight  
He turned and kissed her eyes awake and said,  
Seeing earth and water neither quick nor dead  
And twilight hungering toward the day to be,  
" As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee."  
And even as rays with clouddlets in the skies  
Confused in brief love's bright contentious wise,  
Sleep strove with sense rekindling in her eyes ;  
And as the flush of birth scarce overcame  
The pale pure pearl of unborn light with flame  
Soft as may touch the rose's heart with shame  
To break not all reluctant out of bud,  
Stole up her sleeping cheek her waking blood ;  
And with the lovely laugh of love that takes  
The whole soul prisoner ere the whole sense wakes,  
Her lips for love's sake bade love's will be done.  
And all the sea lay subject to the sun.

## III

## TRISTRAM IN BRITTANY

“ ‘ As the dawn loves the sunlight I love thee ;  
As men that shall be swallowed of the sea  
Love the sea’s lovely beauty ; as the night  
That wanes before it loves the young sweet light,  
And dies of loving ; as the worn-out noon  
Loves twilight, and as twilight loves the moon  
That on its grave a silver seal shall set—  
We have loved and slain each other, and love yet.  
Slain ; for we live not surely, being in twain :  
In her I lived, and in me she is slain,  
Who loved me that I brought her to her doom,  
Who loved her that her love might be my tomb.  
As all the streams on earth and all fresh springs  
And sweetest waters, every brook that sings,  
Each fountain where the young year dips its wings  
First, and the first-fledged branches of it wave,  
Even with one heart’s love seek one bitter grave.  
From hills that first see bared the morning’s breast  
And heights the sun last yearns to from the west,  
All tend but toward the sea, all born most high  
Strive downward, passing all things joyous by,  
Seek to it and cast their lives in it and die.

So strive all lives for death which all lives win ;  
So sought her soul to my soul, and therein  
Was poured and perished : O my love, and mine  
Sought to thee and died of thee and died as thine.  
As the dawn loves the sunlight that must cease  
Ere dawn again may rise and pass in peace ;  
Must die that she being dead may live again,  
To be by his new rising nearly slain.  
So rolls the great wheel of the great world round.  
And no change in it and no fault is found,  
And no true life of perdurable breath,  
And surely no irrevocable death.  
Day after day night comes that day may break,  
And day comes back for night's reiterate sake.  
Each into each dies, each of each is born :  
Day past is night, shall night past not be morn ?  
Out of this moonless and faint-hearted night  
That love yet lives in, shall there not be light ?  
Light strong as love, that love may live in yet ?  
Alas, but how shall foolish hope forget  
How all these loving things that kill and die  
Meet not but for a breath's space and pass by ?  
Night is kissed once of dawn and dies, and day  
But touches twilight and is rapt away.  
So may my love and her love meet once more,  
And meeting be divided as of yore.  
Yea, surely as the day-star loves the sun  
And when he hath risen is utterly undone,  
So is my love of her and hers of me—  
And its most sweetness bitter as the sea.  
Would God yet dawn might see the sun and die ! ”  
Three years had looked on earth and passed it by  
Since Tristram looked on Iseult, when he stood  
So communing with dreams of evil and good,

And let all sad thoughts through his spirit sweep  
As leaves through air or tears through eyes that weep  
Or snowflakes through dark weather : and his soul,  
That had seen all those sightless seasons roll  
One after one, wave over weary wave,  
Was in him as a corpse is in its grave.  
Yet, for his heart was mighty, and his might  
Through all the world as a great sound and light,  
The mood was rare upon him ; save that here  
In the low sundawn of the lightening year  
With all last year's toil and its triumph done  
He could not choose but yearn for that set sun  
Which at this season saw the firstborn kiss  
That made his lady's mouth one fire with his.  
Yet his great heart being greater than his grief  
Kept all the summer of his strength in leaf  
And all the rose of his sweet spirit in flower ;  
Still his soul fed upon the sovereign hour  
That had been or that should be ; and once more  
He looked through drifted sea and drifting shore  
That crumbled in the wave-breach, and again  
Spake sad and deep within himself : "What pain  
Should make a man's soul wholly break and die,  
Sapped as weak sand by water ? How shall I  
Be less than all less things are that endure  
And strive and yield when time is ? Nay, full sure  
All these and we are parts of one same end ;  
And if through fire or water we twain tend  
To that sure life where both must be made one,  
If one we be, what matter ? Thou, O sun,  
The face of God, if God thou be not—nay,  
What but God should I think thee, what should say,  
Seeing thee risen, but very God ?—should I,  
I fool, rebuke thee sovereign in thy sky,

The clouds dead round thee and the air alive,  
The winds that lighten and the waves that strive  
Toward this shore as to that beneath thy breath,  
Because in me my thoughts bear all towards death ?  
O sun, that when we are dead wilt rise as bright,  
Air deepening up toward heaven, and nameless light,  
And heaven immeasurable, and faint clouds blown  
Between us and the lowest aerial zone  
And each least skirt of their imperial state—  
Forgive us that we held ourselves so great !  
What should I do to curse you ? I indeed  
Am a thing meaner than this least wild weed  
That my foot bruises and I know not—yet  
Would not be mean enough for worms to fret  
Before their time and mine was.

“ Ah, and ye  
Light washing weeds, blind waifs of dull blind sea,  
Do ye so thirst and hunger and aspire,  
Are ye so moved with such long strong desire  
In the ebb and flow of your sad life, and strive  
Still toward some end ye shall not see alive—  
But at high noon ye know it by light and heat  
Some half-hour, till ye feel the fresh tide beat  
Up round you, and at night’s most bitter noon  
The ripples leave you naked to the moon ?  
And this dim dusty heather that I tread,  
These half-born blossoms, born at once and dead,  
Sere brown as funeral cloths, and purple as pall,  
What if some life and grief be in them all ?

“ Ay, what of these ? but, O strong sun ! O sea !  
I bid not you, divine things ! comfort me,  
I stand not up to match you in your sight—  
Who hath said ye have mercy toward us, ye who have  
might ?

And though ye had mercy, I think I would not pray  
That ye should change your counsel or your way  
To make our life less bitter : if such power  
Be given the stars on one deciduous hour,  
And such might be in planets to destroy  
Grief and rebuild, and break and build up joy,  
What man would stretch forth hand on them to make  
Fate mutable, God foolish, for his sake ?  
For if in life or death be aught of trust,  
And if some unseen just God or unjust  
Put soul into the body of natural things  
And in time's pauseless feet and worldwide wings  
Some spirit of impulse and some sense of will  
That steers them through the seas of good and ill  
To some incognizable and actual end,  
Be it just or unjust, foe to man or friend,  
How should we make the stable spirit to swerve,  
How teach the strong soul of the world to serve,  
The imperious will in time and sense in space  
That gives man life turn back to give man place—  
The conscious law lose conscience of its way,  
The rule and reason fail from night and day,  
The streams flow back toward whence the springs  
began,  
That less of thirst might sear the lips of man ?  
Let that which is be, and sure strengths stand sure,  
And evil or good and death or life endure,  
Not alterable and rootless; but indeed  
A very stem born of a very seed  
That brings forth fruit in season : how should this  
Die that was sown, and that not be which is,  
And the old fruit change that came of the ancient  
root,  
And he that planted bid it not bear fruit,

And he that watered smite his vine with drouth  
Because its grapes are bitter in our mouth,  
And he that kindled quench the sun with night  
Because its beams are fire against our sight,  
And he that tuned untune the sounding spheres  
Because their song is thunder in our ears ?  
How should the skies change and the stars, and  
time

Break the large concord of the years that chime,  
Answering, as wave to wave beneath the moon  
That draws them shoreward, mar the whole tide's  
tune

For the instant foam's sake on one turning wave—  
For man's sake that is grass upon a grave ?  
How should the law that knows not soon or late,  
For whom no time nor space is—how should fate,  
That is not good nor evil, wise nor mad,  
Nor just nor unjust, neither glad nor sad—  
How should the one thing that hath being, the one  
That moves not as the stars move or the sun  
Or any shadow or shape that lives or dies  
In likeness of dead earth or living skies,  
But its own darkness and its proper light  
Clothe it with other names than day or night,  
And its own soul of strength and spirit of breath  
Feed it with other powers than life or death—  
How should it turn from its great way to give  
Man that must die a clearer space to live ?  
Why should the waters of the sea be cleft,  
The hills be molten to his right and left,  
That he from deep to deep might pass dry-shod,  
Or look between the viewless heights on God ?  
Hath he such eyes as, when the shadows flee,  
The sun looks out with to salute the sea ?

Is his hand bounteous as the morning's hand ?  
Or where the night stands hath he feet to stand ?  
Will the storm cry not when he bids it cease ?  
Is it his voice that saith to the east wind, Peace ?  
Is his breath mightier than the west wind's breath ?  
Doth his heart know the things of life and death ?  
Can his face bring forth sunshine and give rain,  
Or his weak will that dies and lives again  
Make one thing certain or bind one thing fast,  
That as he willed it shall be at the last ?  
How should the storms of heaven and kindled lights  
And all the depths of things and topless heights  
And air and earth and fire and water change  
Their likeness, and the natural world grow strange,  
And all the limits of their life undone  
Lose count of time and conscience of the sun,  
And that fall under which was fixed above,  
That man might have a larger hour for love ? "

So musing with close lips and lifted eyes  
That smiled with self-contempt to live so wise,  
With silent heart so hungry now so long,  
So late grown clear, so miserably made strong,  
About the wolds a banished man he went,  
The brown wolds bare and sad as banishment,  
By wastes of fruitless flowerage, and grey downs  
That felt the sea-wind shake their wild-flower  
crowns  
As though fierce hands would pluck from some grey  
head  
The spoils of majesty despised and dead,  
And fill with crying and comfortless strange sound  
Their hollow sides and heights of herbless ground.  
Yet as he went fresh courage on him came,  
Till dawn rose too within him as a flame ;

The heart of the ancient hills and his were one ;  
The winds took counsel with him, and the sun  
Spake comfort ; in his ears the shout of birds  
Was as the sound of clear sweet-spirited words,  
The noise of streams as laughter from above  
Of the old wild lands, and as a cry of love  
Spring's trumpet-blast blown over moor and lea :  
The skies were red as love is, and the sea  
Was as the floor of heaven for love to tread.  
So went he as with light about his head,  
And in the joyous travail of the year  
Grew April-hearted ; since nor grief nor fear  
Can master so a young man's blood so long  
That it shall move not to the mounting song  
Of that sweet hour when earth replumes her wings  
And with fair face and heart set heavenward sings  
As an awakened angel unaware  
That feels his sleep fall from him, and his hair  
By some new breath of wind and music stirred,  
Till like the sole song of one heavenly bird  
Sounds all the singing of the host of heaven,  
And all the glories of the sovereign Seven  
Are as one face of one incorporate light.  
And as that host of singers in God's sight  
Might draw toward one that slumbered, and arouse  
The lips requickened and rekindling brows,  
So seemed the earthly host of all things born  
In sight of spring and eyeshot of the morn,  
All births of land or waifs of wind and sea,  
To draw toward him that sorrowed, and set free  
From presage and remembrance of all pains  
The life that leapt and lightened in his veins.  
So with no sense abashed nor sunless look,  
But with exalted eyes and heart, he took

His part of sun or storm-wind, and was glad,  
For all things lost, of these good things he had.

And the spring loved him surely, being from birth  
One made out of the better part of earth,  
A man born as at sunrise ; one that saw  
Not without reverence and sweet sense of awe  
But wholly without fear or fitful breath  
The face of life watched by the face of death ;  
And living took his fill of rest and strife,  
Of love and change, and fruit and seed of life,  
And when his time to live in light was done  
With unbent head would pass out of the sun :  
A spirit as morning, fair and clear and strong,  
Whose thought and work were as one harp and  
song

Heard through the world as in a strange king's hall  
Some great guest's voice that sings of festival.  
So seemed all things to love him, and his heart  
In all their joy of life to take such part,  
That with the live earth and the living sea  
He was as one that communed mutually  
With naked heart to heart of friend to friend :  
And the star deepening at the sunset's end,  
And the moon fallen before the gate of day  
As one sore wearied with vain length of way,  
And the winds wandering, and the streams and  
skies,  
As faces of his fellows in his eyes.  
Nor lacked there love where he was evermore  
Of man and woman, friend of sea or shore,  
Not measurable with weight of graven gold,  
Free as the sun's gift of the world to hold  
Given each day back to man's reconquering sight  
That loses but its lordship for a night.

And now that after many a season spent  
In barren ways and works of banishment,  
Toil of strange fights and many a fruitless field,  
Ventures of quest and vigils under shield,  
He came back to the strait of sundering sea  
That parts green Cornwall from grey Brittany,  
Where dwelt the high king's daughter of the lands,  
Iseult, named alway from her fair white hands,  
She looked on him and loved him ; but being young  
Made shamefastness a seal upon her tongue,  
And on her heart, that none might hear its cry,  
Set the sweet signet of humility.

Yet when he came a stranger in her sight,  
A banished man and weary, no such knight  
As when the Swallow dipped her bows in foam  
Steered singing that imperial Iseult home,  
This maiden with her sinless sixteen years  
Full of sweet thoughts and hopes that played at  
fears

Cast her eyes on him but in courteous wise,  
And lo, the man's face burned upon her eyes  
As though she had turned them on the naked sun :  
And through her limbs she felt sweet passion run  
As fire that flowed down from her face, and beat  
Soft through stirred veins on even to her hands and  
feet

As all her body were one heart on flame,  
Athrob with love and wonder and sweet shame.  
And when he spake there sounded in her ears  
As 'twere a song out of the graves of years  
Heard, and again forgotten, and again  
Remembered with a rapturous pulse of pain.  
But as the maiden mountain snow sublime  
Takes the first sense of April's trembling time

Soft on a brow that burns not though it blush  
To feel the sunrise hardly half aflush,  
So took her soul the sense of change, nor thought  
That more than maiden love was more than nought  
Her eyes went hardly after him, her cheek  
Grew scarce a goodlier flower to hear him speak,  
Her bright mouth no more trembled than a rose  
May for the least wind's breathless sake that blows  
Too soft to sue save for a sister's kiss,  
And if she sighed in sleep she knew not this.  
Yet in her heart hovered the thoughts of things  
Past, that with lighter or with heavier wings  
Beat round about her memory, till it burned  
With grief that brightened and with hope that  
yearned,  
Seeing him so great and sad, nor knowing what  
fate  
Had bowed and crowned a head so sad and great.  
Nor might she guess but little, first or last,  
Though all her heart so hung upon his past,  
Of what so bowed him for what sorrow's sake :  
For scarce of aught at any time he spake  
That from his own land oversea had sent  
His lordly life to barren banishment.  
Yet still or soft or keen remembrance clung  
Close round her of the least word from his tongue  
That fell by chance of courtesy, to greet  
With grace of tender thanks her pity, sweet  
As running straems to men's way-wearied feet.  
And when between strange words her name would  
fall,  
Suddenly straightway to that lure's recall  
Back would his heart bound as the falconer's bird,  
And tremble and bow down before the word.

‘Iseult’—and all the cloudlike world grew flame,  
 And all his heart flashed lightning at her name ;  
 ‘Iseult’—and all the wan waste weary skies  
 Shone as his queen’s own love-enkindled eyes.  
 And seeing the bright blood in his face leap up  
 As red wine mantling in a royal cup  
 To hear the sudden sweetness of the sound  
 Ring, but ere well his heart had time to bound  
 His cheek would change, and grief bow down his  
 head,  
 ‘Haply,’ the girl’s heart, though she spake not,  
 said,  
 ‘This name of mine was worn of one long dead,  
 Some sister that he loved :’ and therewithal  
 Would pity bring her heart more deep in thrall.  
 But once, when winds about the world made mirth,  
 And March held revel hard on April’s birth  
 Till air and sea were jubilant as earth,  
 Delight and doubt in sense and soul began,  
 And yearning of the maiden toward the man,  
 Harping on high before her : for his word  
 Was fire that kindled in her heart that heard,  
 And alway through the rhymes reverberate came  
 The virginal soft burden of her name.  
 And ere the full song failed upon her ear  
 Joy strove within her till it cast out fear,  
 And all her heart was as his harp, and rang  
 Swift music, made of hope whose birthnote sprang  
 Bright in the blood that kindled as he sang.

‘Stars know not how we call them, nor may flowers  
 Know by what happy name the hovering hours  
 Baptize their new-born heads with dew and flame :  
 And Love, adored of all time as of ours,  
 Iseult, knew nought for ages of his name.

“ With many tongues men called on him, but he  
 Wist not which word of all might worthiest be  
 To sound for ever in his ear the same,  
 Till heart of man might hear and soul might see,  
 Iseult, the radiance ringing from thy name.

“ By many names men called him, as the night  
 By many a name calls many a starry light,  
 Her several sovereigns of dividual fame ;  
 But day by one name only calls aright,  
 Iseult, the sun that bids men praise his name.

“ In many a name of man his name soared high  
 And song shone round it soaring, till the sky  
 Rang rapture, and the world’s fast-founded frame  
 Trembled with sense of triumph, even as I,  
 Iseult, with sense of worship at thy name.

“ In many a name of woman smiled his power  
 Incarnate, as all summer in a flower,  
 Till winter bring forgetfulness or shame :  
 But thine, the keystone of his topless tower,  
 Iseult, is one with Love’s own lordliest name.

“ Iseult my love, Iseult my queen twice crowned,  
 In thee my death, in thee my life lies bound :  
 Names are there yet that all men’s hearts acclaim,  
 But Love’s own heart rings answer to the sound,  
 Iseult, that bids it bow before thy name.”

There ceased his voice yearning upon the word,  
 Struck with strong passion dumb : but she that  
 heard  
 Quailed to the heart, and trembled ere her eyes  
 Durst let the loving light within them rise,  
 And yearn on his for answer : yet at last,  
 Albeit not all her fear was overpast,

Hope, kindling even the frost of fear apace  
With sweet fleet bloom and breath of gradual grace,  
Flushed in the changing roses of her face.  
And ere the strife took truce of white with red,  
Or joy for soft shame's sake durst lift up head,  
Something she would and would not fain have said,  
And wist not what the fluttering word would be,  
But rose and reached forth to him her hand : and he,  
Heart-stricken, bowed his head and dropped his knee,  
And on her fragrant hand his lips were fire ;  
And their two hearts were as one trembling lyre  
Touched by the keen wind's kiss with brief desire  
And music shuddering at its own delight.  
So dawned the moonrise of their marriage night.

## IV

## THE MAIDEN MARRIAGE

SPRING watched her last moon burn and fade with  
May

While the days deepened toward a bridal day.  
And on her snowbright hand the ring was set  
While in the maiden's ear the song's word yet  
Hovered, that hailed as love's own queen by name  
Iseult : and in her heart the word was flame ;  
A pulse of light, a breath of tender fire,  
Too dear for doubt, too driftless for desire.  
Between her father's hand and brother's led  
From hall to shrine, from shrine to marriage-bed,  
She saw not how by hap at home-coming  
Fell from her new lord's hand a royal ring,  
Whereon he looked, and felt the pulse astart  
Speak passion in his faith-forsaken heart.  
For this was given him of the hand wherein  
That heart's pledge lay for ever : so the sin  
That should be done if truly he should take  
This maid to wife for strange love's faithless sake  
Struck all his mounting spirit abashed, and fear  
Fell cold for shame's sake on his changing cheer.  
Yea, shame's own fire that burned upon his brow  
To bear the brand there of a broken vow

Was frozen again for very fear thereof  
That wrung his heart with keener pangs than love  
And all things rose upon him, all things past  
Ere last they parted, cloven in twain at last,  
Iseult from Tristram, Tristram from the queen ;  
And how men found them in the wild woods green  
Sleeping, but sundered by the sword between,  
Dividing breast from amorous breast a span,  
But scarce in heart the woman from the man  
As far as hope from joy or sleep from truth,  
And Mark that saw them held for sacred sooth  
These were no fleshly lovers, by that sign  
That severed them, still slumbering ; so divine  
He deemed it : how at waking they beheld  
The king's folk round the king, and uncomelled  
Were fain to follow and fare among them home  
Back to the towers washed round with rolling foam  
And storied halls wherethrough sea-music rang :  
And how report thereafter swelled and sprang,  
A full-mouthed serpent, hissing in men's ears  
Word of their loves : and one of all his peers  
That most he trusted, being his kinsman born,  
A man base-moulded for the stamp of scorn,  
Whose heart with hate was keen and cold and dark,  
Gave note by midnight whisper to King Mark  
Where he might take them sleeping ; how ere day  
Had seen the grim next morning all away  
Fast bound they brought him down a weary way  
With forty knights about him, and their chief  
That traitor who for trust had given him grief,  
To the old hoar chapel, like a strait stone tomb  
Sheer on the sea-rocks, there to take his doom :  
How, seeing he needs must die, he bade them yet  
Bethink them if they durst for shame forget

What deeds for Cornwall had he done, and wrought  
For all their sake what rescue, when he fought  
Against the fierce foul Irish foe that came  
To take of them for tribute in their shame  
Three hundred heads of children ; whom in fight  
His hand redeeming slew Moraunt the knight  
That none durst lift his eyes against, not one  
Had heart but he, who now had help of none,  
To take the battle ; whence great shame it were  
To knighthood, yea, foul shame on all men there,  
To see him die so shamefully : nor durst  
One man look up, nor one make answer first,  
Save even the very traitor, who defied  
And would have slain him naked in his pride,  
But he, that saw the sword plucked forth to slay,  
Looked on his hands, and wrenched their bonds away,  
Haling those twain that he went bound between  
Suddenly to him, and kindling in his mien  
Shone lion-fashion forth with eyes alight,  
And lion-wise leapt on that kinsman knight  
And wrung forth of his felon hands with might  
The sword that should have slain him weaponless,  
And smote him sheer down : then came all the press  
All raging in upon him ; but he wrought  
So well for his deliverance as they fought  
That ten strong knights rejoicingly he slew,  
And took no wound, nor wearied : then the crew  
Waxed greater, and their cry on him ; but he  
Had won the chapel now above the sea  
That chafed right under : then the heart in him  
Sprang, seeing the low cliff clear to leap, and swim  
Right out by the old blithe way the sea-mew takes  
Across the bounding billow-belt that breaks  
For ever, but the loud bright chain it makes

To bind the bridal bosom of the land  
Time shall unlink not ever, till his hand  
Fall by its own last blow dead : thence again  
Might he win forth into the green great main  
Far on beyond, and there yield up his breath  
At least, with God's will, by no shameful death,  
Or haply save himself, and come anew  
Some long day later, ere sweet life were through.  
And as the sea-gull hovers high, and turns  
With eyes wherein the keen heart glittering yearns  
Down toward the sweet green sea whereon the broad  
noon burns,  
And suddenly, soul-stricken with delight,  
Drops, and the glad wave gladdens, and the light  
Sees wing and wave confuse their fluttering white,  
So Tristram one brief breathing-space apart  
Hung, and gazed down ; then with exulting heart  
Plunged : and the fleet foam round a joyous head  
Flashed, that shot under, and ere a shaft had sped  
Rose again radiant, a rejoicing star,  
And high along the water-ways afar  
Triumphed : and all they deemed he needs must  
die ;  
But Gouvernayle his squire, that watched hard by,  
Sought where perchance a man might win ashore,  
Striving, with strong limbs labouring long and sore,  
And there abode an hour : till as from fight  
Crowned with hard conquest won by mastering might,  
Hardly, but happier for the imperious toil,  
Swam the knight in forth of the close waves' coil,  
Sea-satiate, bruised with buffets of the brine,  
Laughing, and flushed as one afire with wine :  
All this came hard upon him in a breath ;  
And how he marvelled in his heart that death

Should be no bitterer than it seemed to be  
There, in the strenuous impulse of the sea  
Borne as to battle deathward : and at last  
How all his after seasons overpast  
Had brought him darkling to this dark sweet hour,  
Where his foot faltered nigh the bridal bower.  
And harder seemed the passage now to pass,  
Though smoother-seeming than the still sea's glass,  
More fit for very manhood's heart to fear,  
Than all straits past of peril. Hardly here  
Might aught of all things hearten him save one,  
Faith : and as men's eyes quail before the sun  
So quailed his heart before the star whose light  
Put out the torches of his bridal night,  
So quailed and shrank with sense of faith's keen star  
That burned as fire beheld by night afar  
Deep in the darkness of his dreams ; for all  
The bride-house now seemed hung with heavier pall  
Than clothes the house of mourning. Yet at last,  
Soul-sick with trembling at the heart, he passed  
Into the sweet light of the maiden bower  
Where lay the lonely lily-featured flower  
That, lying within his hand to gather, yet  
Might not be gathered of it. Fierce regret  
And bitter loyalty strove hard at strife  
With amorous pity toward the tender wife  
That wife indeed might never be, to wear  
The very crown of wedlock ; never bear  
Children, to watch and worship her white hair  
When time should change, with hand more soft than  
snow,  
The fashion of its glory ; never know  
The loveliness of laughing love that lives  
On little lips of children : all that gives

Glory and grace and reverence and delight  
 To wedded woman by her bridal right,  
 All praise and pride that flowers too fair to fall,  
 Love that should give had stripped her of them all  
 And left her bare for ever. So his thought  
 Consumed him, as a fire within that wrought  
 Visibly, ravening till its wrath were spent :  
 So pale he stood, so bowed and passion-rent,  
 Before the blithe-faced bride-folk, ere he went  
 Within the chamber, heavy-eyed : and there  
 Gleamed the white hands and glowed the glimmering  
 hair  
 That might but move his memory more of one more  
 fair,  
 More fair than all this beauty : but in sooth  
 So fair she too shone in her flower of youth  
 That scarcely might man's heart hold fast its  
 truth,  
 Though strong, who gazed upon her : for her eyes  
 Were emerald-soft as evening-coloured skies,  
 And a smile in them like the light therein  
 Slept, or shone out in joy that knew not sin,  
 Clear as a child's own laughter : and her mouth,  
 Albeit no rose full-hearted from the south  
 And passion-coloured for the perfect kiss  
 That signs the soul for love and stamps it his,  
 Was soft and bright as any bud new-blown ;  
 And through her cheek the gentler lifebloom shone  
 Of mild wild roses nigh the northward sea.  
 So in her bride-bed lay the bride : and he  
 Drew nigh, and all the high sad heart in him  
 Yearned on her, seeing the twilight meek and dim  
 Through all the soft alcove tremblingly lit  
 With hovering silver, as a heart in it

Beating, that burned from one deep lamp above,  
Fainter than fire of torches, as the love  
Within him fainter than a bridegroom's fire,  
No marriage-torch red with the heart's desire,  
But silver-soft, a flameless light that glowed  
Starlike along night's dark and starry road  
Wherein his soul was traveller. And he sighed,  
Seeing, and with eyes set sadly toward his bride  
Laid him down by her, and spake not : but within  
His heart spake, saying how sore should be the sin  
To break toward her, that of all womankind  
Was faithallest, faith plighted, or unbind  
The bond first linked between them when they drank  
The love-draught : and his quick blood sprang and  
sank,  
Remembering in the pulse of all his veins  
That red swift rapture, all its fiery pains  
And all its fierier pleasures : and he spake  
Aloud, one burning word for love's keen sake—  
“ Iseult ; ” and full of love and lovelier fear  
A virgin voice gave answer—“ I am here.”  
And a pang rent his heart at root : but still,  
For spirit and flesh were vassals to his will,  
Strong faith held mastery on them : and the breath  
Felt on his face did not his will to death,  
Nor glance nor lute-like voice nor flower-soft touch  
Might so prevail upon it overmuch  
That constancy might less prevail than they,  
For all he looked and loved her as she lay  
Smiling ; and soft as bird alights on bough  
He kissed her maiden mouth and blameless brow,  
Once, and again his heart within him sighed :  
But all his young blood's yearning toward his bride,

How hard soe'er it held his life awake  
For passion, and sweet nature's unforbidden sake,  
And will that strove unwillingly with will it might not  
break,  
Fell silent as a wind abashed, whose breath  
Dies out of heaven, suddenly done to death,  
When in between them on the dumb dusk air  
Floated the bright shade of a face more fair  
Than hers that hard beside him shrank and smiled  
And wist of all no more than might a child.  
So had she all her heart's will, all she would,  
For love's sake that sufficed her, glad and good,  
All night safe sleeping in her maidenhood.

## ISEULT AT TINTAGEL.

BUT that same night in Cornwall oversea  
Couched at Queen Iseult's hand, against her knee,  
With keen kind eyes that read her whole heart's pain  
Fast at wide watch lay Tristram's hound Hodain,  
The goodliest and the mightiest born on earth,  
That many a forest day of fiery mirth  
Had plied his craft before them ; and the queen  
Cherished him, even for those dim years between,  
More than of old in those bright months far flown  
When ere a blast of Tristram's horn was blown  
Each morning as the woods rekindled, ere  
Day gat full empire of the glimmering air,  
Delight of dawn would quicken him, and fire  
Spring and pant in his breath with bright desire  
To be among the dewy ways on quest :  
But now perforce at restless-hearted rest  
He chafed through days more barren than the sand,  
Soothed hardly but soothed only with her hand,  
Though fain to fawn thereon and follow, still  
With all his heart and all his loving will  
Desiring one divided from his sight,  
For whose lost sake dawn was as dawn of night  
And noon as night's noon in his eyes was dark.  
But in the halls far under sat King Mark,

Feasting, and full of cheer, with heart uplift,  
 As on the night that harper gat his gift :  
 And music revelled on the fitful air,  
 And songs came floated up the festal stair,  
 And muffled roar of wassail, where the king  
 Took heart from wine-cups and the quiring string  
 Till all his cold thin veins rejoiced and ran  
 Strong as with lifeblood of a kinglier man.  
 But the queen shut from sound her wearied ears,  
 Shut her sad eyes from sense of aught save tears,  
 And wrung her hair with soft fierce hands, and  
 prayed :

“ O God, God born of woman, of a maid,  
 Christ, once in flesh of thine own fashion clad ;  
 O very love, so glad in heaven and sad  
 On earth for earth's sake alway ; since thou art  
 Pure only, I only impure of spirit and heart,  
 Since thou for sin's sake and the bitter doom  
 Didst as a veil put on a virgin's womb,  
 I that am none, and cannot hear or see  
 Or shadow or likeness or a sound of thee  
 Far off, albeit with man's own speech and face  
 Thou shine yet and thou speak yet, showing forth  
 grace—

Ah me ! grace only shed on souls that are  
 Lit and led forth of shadow by thy star—  
 Alas ! to these men only grace, to these,  
 Lord, whom thy love draws Godward, to thy knees—  
 I, can I draw thee me-ward, can I seek,  
 Who love thee not, to love me ? seeing how weak,  
 Lord, all this little love I bear thee is,  
 And how much is my strong love more than this,  
 My love that I love man with, that I bear  
 Him sinning through me sinning ? wilt thou care,

God, for this love, if love be any, alas,  
In me to give thee, though long since there was,  
How long, when I too, Lord, was clean, even I,  
That now am unclean till the day I die—  
Haply by burning, harlot-fashion, made  
A horror in all hearts of wife and maid,  
Hateful, not knowing if ever in these mine eyes  
Shone any light of thine in any wise  
Or this were love at all that I bore thee ? ”

And the night spake, and thundered on the sea,  
Ravelling aloud for ruin of lives : and all  
The bastions of the main cliff's northward wall  
Rang response out from all their deepening length,  
As the east wind girded up his godlike strength  
And hurled in hard against that high-towered hold  
The fleeces of the flock that knows no fold,  
The rent white shreds of shattering storm : but she  
Heard not nor heeded wind or storming sea,  
Knew not if night were mild or mad with wind.

“ Yea, though deep lips and tender hair be thinned,  
Though cheek wither, brow fade, and bosom wane,  
Shall I change also from this heart again  
To maidenhood of heart and holiness ?  
Shall I more love thee, Lord, or love him less—  
Ah miserable ! though spirit and heart be rent,  
Shall I repent, Lord God ? shall I repent ?  
Nay, though thou slay me ! for herein I am blest,  
That as I loved him yet I love him best—  
More than mine own soul or thy love or thee,  
Though thy love save and my love save not me.  
Blest am I beyond women even herein,  
That beyond all born women is my sin,  
And perfect my transgression : that above  
All offerings of all others is my love,

Who have chosen it only, and put away for this  
 Thee, and my soul's hope, Saviour, of the kiss  
 Wherewith thy lips make welcome all thine own  
 When in them life and death are overthrown ;  
 The sinless lips that seal the death of sin,  
 The kiss wherewith their dumb lips touched begin  
 Singing in heaven.

“ Where we shall never, love,  
 Never stand up nor sing ! for God above  
 Knows us, how too much more than God to me  
 Thy sweet love is, my poor love is to thee !  
 Dear, dost thou see now, dost thou hear to-night,  
 Sleeping, my waste wild speech, my face worn  
 white,  
 —Speech once heard soft by thee, face once kissed  
 red !—

In such a dream as when men see their dead  
 And know not if they know if dead these be ?  
 Ah love, are thy days my days, and to thee  
 Are all nights like as my nights ? does the sun  
 Grieve thee ? art thou soul-sick till day be done,  
 And weary till day rises ? is thine heart  
 Full of dead things as mine is ? Nay, thou art  
 Man, with man's strength and praise and pride of  
 life,  
 No bondwoman, no queen, no loveless wife  
 That would be shamed albeit she had not sinned.”

And swordlike was the sound of the iron wind,  
 And as a breaking battle was the sea.

“ Nay, Lord, I pray thee let him love not me,  
 Love me not any more, nor like me die,  
 And be no more than such a thing as I.  
 Turn his heart from me, lest my love too lose  
 Thee as I lose thee, and his fair soul refuse

For my sake thy fair heaven, and as I fell  
Fall, and be mixed with my soul and with hell.  
Let me die rather, and only ; let me be  
Hated of him so he be loved of thee,  
Lord : for I would not have him with me there  
Out of thy light and love in the unlit air,  
Out of thy sight in the unseen hell where I  
Go gladly, going alone, so thou on high  
Lift up his soul and love him—Ah, Lord, Lord,  
Shalt thou love as I love him ? she that poured  
From the alabaster broken at thy feet  
An ointment very precious, not so sweet  
As that poured likewise forth before thee then  
From the rehallowed heart of Magdalen,  
From a heart broken, yearning like the dove,  
An ointment very precious which is love—  
Couldst thou being holy and God, and sinful she,  
Love her indeed as surely she loved thee ?  
Nay, but if not, then as we sinners can  
Let us love still in the old sad wise of man.  
For with less love than my love, having had  
Mine, though God love him he shall not be glad  
And with such love as my love, I wot well,  
He shall not lie disconsolate in hell :  
Sad only as souls for utter love's sake be  
Here, and a little sad, perchance, for me—  
Me happy, me more glad than God above,  
In the utmost hell whose fires consume not love !  
For in the waste ways emptied of the sun  
He would say—‘ Dear, thy place is void, and one  
Weeps among angels for thee, with his face  
Veiled, saying, *O sister, how thy chosen place  
Stands desolate, that God made fair for thee !*  
*Is heaven not sweeter, and we thy brethren, we*

*Fairer than love on earth and life in hell?*

And I—with me were all things then not well?  
Should I not answer—‘O love, be well content;  
Look on me, and behold if I repent.’  
This were more to me than an angel’s wings.  
Yea, many men pray God for many things,  
But I pray that this only thing may be.”

And as a full field charging was the sea,  
And as the cry of slain men was the wind.

“ Yea, since I surely loved him, and he sinned  
Surely, though not as my sin his be black,  
God, give him to me—God, God, give him back !  
For now how should we live in twain or die ?  
I am he indeed, thou knowest, and he is I.  
Not man and woman several as we were,  
But one thing with one life and death to bear.  
How should one love his own soul overmuch ?  
And time is long since last I felt the touch,  
The sweet touch of my lover, hand and breath,  
In such delight as puts delight to death,  
Burn my soul through, till spirit and soul and sense,  
In the sharp grasp of the hour, with violence  
Died, and again through pangs of violent birth  
Lived, and laughed out with refluent might of mirth ;  
Laughed each on other and shuddered into one,  
As a cloud shuddering dies into the sun.  
Ah, sense is that or spirit, soul or flesh,  
That only love lulls or awakes afresh ?  
Ah, sweet is that or bitter, evil or good,  
That very love allays not as he would ?  
Nay, truth is this or vanity, that gives  
No love assurance when love dies or lives ?  
This that my spirit is wrung withal, and yet  
No surerler knows if haply thine forget,

Thou that my spirit is wrung for, nor can say  
Love is not in thee dead as yesterday ?  
Dost thou feel, thou, this heartbeat whence my heart  
Would send thee word what life is mine apart,  
And know by keen response what life is thine ?  
Dost thou not hear one cry of all of mine ?  
O Tristram's heart, have I no part in thee ? ”  
And all her soul was as the breaking sea,  
And all her heart anhungered as the wind.

“ Dost thou repent thee of the sin we sinned ?  
Dost thou repent thee of the days and nights  
That kindled and that quenched for us their lights,  
The months that feasted us with all their hours.  
The ways that breathed of us in all their flowers,  
The dells that sang of us with all their doves ?  
Dost thou repent thee of the wildwood loves ?  
Is thine heart changed, and hallowed ? art thou  
grown  
God's, and not mine ? Yet, though my heart make  
moan,  
Fain would my soul give thanks for thine, if thou  
Be saved—yea, fain praise God, and knows not how.  
How should it know thanksgiving ? nay, or learn  
Aught of the love wherewith thine own should burn,  
God's, that should cast out as an evil thing  
Mine ? yea, what hand of prayer have I to cling,  
What heart to prophesy, what spirit of sight  
To strain insensual eyes toward increase light,  
Who look but back on life wherein I sinned ? ”  
And all their past came wailing in the wind,  
And all their future thundered in the sea.

“ But if my soul might touch the time to be,  
If hand might handle now or eye behold  
My life and death ordained me from of old,

Life palpable, compact of blood and breath,  
Visible, present, naked, very death,  
Should I desire to know before the day  
These that I know not, nor is man that may?  
For haply, seeing, my heart would break for fear,  
And my soul timeless cast its load off here,  
Its load of life too bitter, love too sweet,  
And fall down shamed and naked at thy feet,  
God, who wouldst take no pity of it, nor give  
One hour back, one of all its hours to live  
Clothed with my mortal body, that once more,  
Once, on this reach of barren beaten shore,  
This stormy strand of life, ere sail were set,  
Had haply felt love's arms about it yet—  
Yea, ere death's bark put off to seaward, might  
With many a grief have bought me one delight  
That then should know me never. Ah, what years  
Would I endure not, filled up full with tears,  
Bitter like blood and dark as dread of death,  
To win one amorous hour of mingling breath,  
One fire-eyed hour and sunnier than the sun,  
For all these nights and days like nights but one?  
One hour of heaven born once, a stormless birth,  
For all these windy weary hours of earth?  
One, but one hour from birth of joy to death,  
For all these hungering hours of feverish breath?  
And I should lose this, having died and sinned."

And as man's anguish clamouring cried the wind,  
And as God's anger answering rang the sea.

"And yet what life—Lord God, what life for me  
Has thy strong wrath made ready? Dost thou think  
How lips whose thirst hath only tears to drink  
Grow grey for grief untimely? Dost thou know,  
O happy God, how men wax weary of woe—

Yea, for their wrong's sake that thine hand hath done  
Come even to hate thy semblance in the sun ?  
Turn back from dawn and noon and all thy light  
To make their souls one with the soul of night ?  
Christ, if thou hear yet or have eyes to see,  
Thou that hadst pity, and hast no pity on me,  
Know'st thou no more, as in this life's sharp span,  
What pain thou hadst on earth, what pain hath man ?  
Hast thou no care, that all we suffer yet ?  
What help is ours of thee if thou forget ?  
What profit have we though thy blood were given,  
If we that sin bleed and be not forgiven ?  
Not love but hate, thou bitter God and strange,  
Whose heart as man's heart hath grown cold with  
change,  
Not love but hate thou shovest us that have sinned.'

And like a world's cry shuddering was the wind,  
And like a God's voice threatening was the sea.

" Nay, Lord, for thou wast gracious ; nay, in thee  
No change can come with time or varying fate,  
No tongue bid thine be less compassionate,  
No sterner eye rebuke for mercy thine,  
No sin put out thy pity—no, not mine.  
Thou knowest us, Lord, thou knowest us, all we are,  
He, and the soul that hath his soul for star :  
Thou knowest as I know, Lord, how much more  
worth

Than all souls clad and clasped about with earth,  
But most of all, God, how much more than I,  
Is this man's soul that surely shall not die.  
What righteousness, what judgment, Lord most  
high,  
Were this, to bend a brow of doom as grim  
As threatens me, me the adulterous wife, on him ?

There lies none other nightly by his side :  
He hath not sought, he shall not seek a bride.  
Far as God sunders earth from heaven above,  
So far was my love born beneath his love.  
I loved him as the sea-wind loves the sea,  
To rend and ruin it only and waste : but he,  
As the sea loves a sea-bird loved he me,  
To foster and uphold my tired life's wing,  
And bounteously beneath me spread forth spring,  
A springtide space whereon to float or fly,  
A world of happy water, whence the sky  
Glowed goodlier, lightening from so glad a glass,  
Than with its own light only. Now, alas !  
Cloud hath come down and clothed it round with  
    storm,  
And gusts and fits of eddying winds deform  
The feature of its glory. Yet be thou,  
God, merciful : nay, show but justice now,  
And let the sin in him that scarce was his  
Stand expiated with exile : and be this  
The price for him, the atonement this, that I  
With all the sin upon me live, and die  
With all thy wrath on me that most have sinned."

    And like man's heart relenting sighed the wind,  
And as God's wrath subsiding sank the sea.

    " But if such grace be possible—if it be  
Not sin more strange than all sins past, and worse  
Evil, that cries upon thee for a curse,  
To pray such prayers from such a heart, do thou  
Hear, and make wide thine hearing toward me now ;  
Let not my soul and his for ever dwell  
Sundered : though doom keep always heaven and hell  
Irreconcilable, infinitely apart,  
Keep not in twain for ever heart and heart

That once, albeit by not thy law, were one ;  
Let this be not thy will, that this be done.  
Let all else, all thou wilt of evil, be,  
But no doom, none, dividing him and me."

By this was heaven stirred eastward, and there came  
Up the rough ripple a labouring light like flame ;  
And dawn, sore trembling still and grey with fear,  
Looked hardly forth, a face of heavier cheer  
Than one which grief or dread yet half enshrouds,  
Wild-eyed and wan, across the cleaving clouds.  
And Iseult, worn with watch long held on pain.  
Turned, and her eye lit on the hound Hodain,  
And all her heart went out in tears : and he  
Laid his kind head along her bended knee,  
Till round his neck her arms went hard, and all  
The night past from her as a chain might fall :  
But yet the heart within her, half undone,  
Wailed, and was loth to let her see the sun.

And ere full day brought heaven and earth to  
flower,  
Far thence, a maiden in a marriage bower,  
That moment, hard by Tristram, oversea,  
Woke with glad eyes Iseult of Brittany.

## VI

## JOYOUS GARD

A LITTLE time, O Love, a little light,  
 A little hour for ease before the night.  
 Sweet Love, that art so bitter ; foolish Love,  
 Whom wise men know for wiser, and thy dove  
 More subtle than the serpent ; for thy sake  
 These pray thee for a little beam to break,  
 A little grace to help them, lest men think  
 Thy servants have but hours like tears to drink.  
 O Love, a little comfort, lest they fear  
 To serve as these have served thee who stand here.

For these are thine, thy servants these, that stand  
 Here nigh the limit of the wild north land,  
 At margin of the grey great eastern sea,  
 Dense-islanded with peaks and reefs, that see  
 No life but of the fleet wings fair and free  
 Which cleave the mist and sunlight all day long  
 With sleepless flight and cries more glad than song.  
 Strange ways of life have led them hither, here  
 To win fleet respite from desire and fear  
 With armistice from sorrow ; strange and sweet  
 Ways trodden by forlorn and casual feet  
 Till kindlier chance woke toward them kindly will  
 In happier hearts of lovers, and their ill

Found rest, as healing surely might it not,  
By gift and kingly grace of Launcelot  
At gracious bidding given of Guenevere.  
For in the trembling twilight of this year  
Ere April sprang from hope to certitude  
Two hearts of friends fast linked had fallen at feud  
As they rode forth on hawking, by the sign  
Which gave his new bride's brother Ganhardine  
To know the truth of Tristram's dealing, how  
Faith kept of him against his marriage vow  
Kept virginal his bride-bed night and morn ;  
Whereat, as wroth his blood should suffer scorn,  
Came Ganhardine to Tristram, saying, " Behold,  
We have loved thee, and for love we have shown of  
old  
Scorn hast thou shown us : wherefore is thy bride  
Not thine indeed, a stranger at thy side,  
Contemned ? what evil hath she done, to be  
Mocked with mouth-marriage and despised of thee,  
Shamed, set at nought, rejected ? " But there came  
On Tristram's brow and eye the shadow and flame  
Confused of wrath and wonder, ere he spake,  
Saying, " Hath she bid thee for thy sister's sake  
Plead with me, who believed of her in heart  
More nobly than to deem such piteous part  
Should find so fair a player ? or whence hast thou  
Of us this knowledge ? " " Nay," said he, " but now,  
Riding beneath these whitethorns overhead,  
There fell a flower into her girdlestead  
Which laughing she shook out, and smiling said—  
' Lo, what large leave the wind hath given this stray,  
To lie more near my heart than till this day  
Aught ever since my mother lulled me lay

Or even my lord came ever ; ' whence I wot  
 We are all thy scorn, a race regarded not  
 Nor held as worth communion of thine own,  
 Except in her be found some fault alone  
 To blemish our alliance." Then replied  
 Tristram, " Nor blame nor scorn may touch my bride,  
 Albeit unknown of love she live, and be  
 Worth a man worthier than her love thought me.  
 Faith only, faith withheld me, faith forbade  
 The blameless grace wherewith love's grace makes  
 glad  
 All lives linked else in wedlock ; not that less  
 I loved the sweet light of her loveliness,  
 But that my love toward faith was more : and thou,  
 Albeit thine heart be keen against me now,  
 Couldst thou behold my very lady, then  
 No more of thee than of all other men  
 Should this my faith be held a faithless fault."  
 And ere that day their hawking came to halt,  
 Being sore of him entreated for a sign,  
 He sware to bring his brother Ganhardine  
 To sight of that strange Iseult : and thereon  
 Forth soon for Cornwall are these brethren gone,  
 Even to that royal pleasance where the hunt  
 Rang ever of old with Tristram s horn in front  
 Blithe as the queen's horse bounded at his side :  
 And first of all her dames forth pranced in pride  
 That day before them, with a ringing rein  
 All golden-glad, the king's false bride Brangwain,  
 The queen's true handmaid ever : and on her  
 Glancing, " Be called for all time truth-teller,  
 O Tristram, of all true men's tongues alive,"  
 Quoth Ganhardine ; " for may my soul so thrive

As yet mine eye drank never sight like this."

" Ay ? " Tristram said, " and she thou look'st on is  
So great in grace of goodliness, that thou  
Hast less thought left of wrath against me now,  
Seeing but my lady's handmaid ? Nay, behold ;  
See'st thou no light more golden than of gold  
Shine where she moves in midst of all, above  
All, past all price or praise or prayer of love ?  
Lo, this is she." But as one mazed with wine  
Stood, stunned in spirit and stricken, Ganhardine,  
And gazed out hard against them : and his heart  
As with a sword was cloven, and rent apart  
As with strong fangs of fire ; and scarce he spake,  
Saying how his life for even a handmaid's sake  
Was made a flame within him. And the knight  
Bade him, being known of none that stood in sight.  
Bear to Brangwain his ring, that she unseen  
Might give in token privily to the queen  
And send swift word where under moon or sun  
They twain might yet be no more twain but one.  
And that same night, under the stars that rolled  
Over their warm deep wildwood nights of old  
Whose hours for grains of sand shed sparks of fire,  
Such way was made anew for their desire  
By secret wile of sickness feigned, to keep  
The king far off her vigils or her sleep,  
That in the queen's pavilion midway set  
By glimmering moondawn were those lovers met,  
And Ganhardine of Brangwain gat him grace.  
And in some passionate soft interspace  
Between two swells of passion, when their lips  
Breathed, and made room for such brief speech as slips  
From tongues athirst with draughts of amorous wine  
That leaves them thirstier than the salt sea's brine,

Was counsel taken how to fly, and where  
 Find covert from the wild world's ravening air  
 That hunts with storm the feet of nights and days  
 Through strange thwart lines of life and flowerless  
 ways.

Then said Iseult : " Lo, now the chance is here  
 Foreshown me late by word of Guenevere,  
 To give me comfort of thy rumoured wrong,  
 My traitor Tristram, when report was strong  
 Of me forsaken and thine heart estranged :  
 Nor should her sweet soul toward me yet be changed  
 Nor all her love lie barren, if mine hand  
 Crave harvest of it from the flowering land.  
 See therefore if this counsel please thee not,  
 That we take horse in haste for Camelot  
 And seek that friendship of her plighted troth  
 Which love shall be full fain to lend, nor loth  
 Shall my love be to take it." So next night  
 The multitudinous stars laughed round their flight,  
 Fulfilling far with laughter made of light  
 The encircling deeps of heaven : and in brief space  
 At Camelot their long love gat them grace  
 Of those fair twain whose heads men's praise im-  
 pearled  
 As love's two lordliest lovers in the world :  
 And thence as guests for harbourage past they  
 forth  
 To win this noblest hold of all the north.  
 Far by wild ways and many days they rode,  
 Till clear across June's kingliest sunset glowed  
 The great round girth of goodly wall that showed  
 Where for one clear sweet season's length should be  
 Their place of strength to rest in, fain and free,  
 By the utmost margin of the loud lone sea.

And now, O Love, what comfort? God most high,  
 Whose life is as a flower's to live and die,  
 Whose light is everlasting : Lord, whose breath  
 Speaks music through the deathless lips of death  
 Whereto time's heart rings answer : Bard, whom  
 time  
 Hears, and is vanquished with a wandering rhyme  
 That once thy lips made fragrant : Seer, whose  
 sooth  
 Joy knows not well, but sorrow knows for truth,  
 Being priestess of thy soothsayings : Love, what  
 grace  
 Shall these twain find at last before thy face?  
 This many a year they have served thee, and  
 deserved,  
 If ever man might yet of all that served,  
 Since the first heartbeat bade the first man's knee  
 Bend, and his mouth take music, praising thee,  
 Some comfort; and some honey indeed of thine  
 Thou hast mixed for these with life's most bitter  
 wine,  
 Commending to their passionate lips a draught  
 No deadlier than thy chosen of old have quaffed  
 And blessed thine hand, their cupbearer's : for not  
 On all men comes the grace that seals their lot  
 As holier in thy sight, for all these feuds  
 That rend it, than the light-souled multitude's,  
 Nor thwarted of thine hand nor blessed ; but these  
 Shall see no twilight, Love, nor fade at ease,  
 Grey-grown and careless of desired delight,  
 But lie down tired and sleep before the night.  
 These shall not live till time or change may chill  
 Or doubt divide or shame subdue their will,

Or fear or slow repentance work them wrong,  
Or love die first : these shall not live so long.  
Death shall not take them drained of dear true life  
Already, sick or stagnant from the strife,  
Quenched : not with dry-drawn veins and lingering  
breath  
Shall these through crumbling hours crouch down to  
death.  
Swift, with one strong clean leap, ere life's pulse  
tire,  
Most like the leap of lions or of fire,  
Sheer death shall bound upon them : one pang past,  
The first keen sense of him shall be their last,  
Their last shall be no sense of any fear,  
More than their life had sense of anguish here.  
Weeks and light months had fled at swallow's  
speed  
Since here their first hour sowed for them the seed  
Of many sweet as rest or hope could be ;  
Since on the blown beach of a glad new sea  
Wherein strange rocks like fighting men stand  
scarred  
They saw the strength and help of Joyous Gard.  
Within the full deep glorious tower that stands  
Between the wild sea and the broad wild lands  
Love led and gave them quiet : and they drew  
Life like a God's life in each wind that blew,  
And took their rest, and triumphed. Day by day  
The mighty moorlands and the sea-walls grey,  
The brown bright waters of green fells that sing  
One song to rocks and flowers and birds on wing,  
Beheld the joy and glory that they had,  
Passing, and how the whole world made them  
glad,

And their great love was mixed with all things  
great,

As life being lovely, and yet being strong like fate.

For when the sun sprang on the sudden sea

Their eyes sprang eastward, and the day to be

Was lit in them untimely : such delight

They took yet of the clear cold breath and light

That goes before the morning, and such grace

Was deathless in them through their whole life's  
space

As dies in many with their dawn that dies

And leaves in pulseless hearts and flameless eyes

No light to lighten and no tear to weep

For youth's high joy that time has cast on sleep.

Yea, this old grace and height of joy they had,

To lose no jot of all that made them glad

And filled their springs of spirit with such fire

That all delight fed in them all desire ;

And no whit less than in their first keen prime

The spring's breath blew through all their summer  
time,

And in their skies would sunlike Love confuse

Clear April colours with hot August hues,

And in their hearts one light of sun and moon

Reigned, and the morning died not of the noon :

Such might of life was in them, and so high

Their heart of love rose higher than fate could fly.

And many a large delight of hawk and hound

The great glad land that knows no bourne or bound,

Save the wind's own and the outer sea-bank's, gave

Their days for comfort ; many a long blithe wave

Buoyed their blithe bark between the bare bald  
rocks,

Deep, steep, and still, save for the swift free flocks

Unshepherded, uncompassed, unconfined,  
That when blown foam keeps all the loud air blind  
Mix with the wind's their triumph, and partake  
The joy of blasts that ravin, waves that break,  
All round and all below their mustering wings,  
A clang ing cloud that round the cliff's edge clings  
On each bleak bluff breaking the strenuous tides  
That rings reverberate mirth when storm bestrides  
The subject night in thunder : many a noon  
They took the moorland's or the bright sea's boon  
With all their hearts into their spirit of sense,  
Rejoicing, where the sudden del's grew dense  
With sharp thick flight of hills i e birds, or where  
On some strait rock's ledge in the intense mute air  
Erect against the cliff's sheer sunlit white  
Blue as the clear north heaven, clothed warm with  
light,  
Stood neck to bended neck and wing to wing  
With heads fast hidden under, close as cling  
Flowers on one flowering almond-branch in spring,  
Three herons deep asleep against the sun,  
Each with one bright foot downward poised, and  
one  
Wing-hidden hard by the bright head, and all  
Still as fair shapes fixed on some wondrous wall  
Of minster-aisle or cloister-close or hall  
To take even time's eye prisoner with delight.  
Or, satisfied with joy of sound and sight,  
They sat and communed of things past : what state  
King Arthur, yet unwarred upon by fate,  
Held high in hall at Camelot, like one  
Whose lordly life was as the mounting sun  
That climbs and pauses on the point of noon,  
Sovereign : how royal rang the tourney's tune

Through Tristram's three days' triumph, spear to  
spear,

When Iseult shone enthroned by Guenevere,  
Rose against rose, the highest adored on earth,  
Imperial : yet with subtle notes of mirth  
Would she bemock her praises, and bemoan  
Her glory by that splendour overthrown  
Which lightened from her sister's eyes elate ;  
Saying how by night a little light seems great,  
But less than least of all things, very nought,  
When dawn undoes the web that darkness wrought ;  
How like a tower of ivory well designed  
By subtlest hand subserving subtlest mind,  
Ivory with flower of rose incarnadined  
And kindling with some God therein revealed,  
A light for grief to look on and be healed,  
Stood Guenevere : and all beholding her  
Were heartstruck even as earth at midsummer  
With burning wonder, hardly to be borne.  
So was that amorous glorious lady born,  
A fiery memory for all storied years :  
Nor might men call her sisters crowned her peers,  
Her sister queens, put all by her to scorn :  
She had such eyes as are not made to mourn ;  
But in her own a gleaming ghost of tears  
Shone, and their glance was slower than Guenevere's,  
And fitfuller with fancies grown of grief ;  
Shamed as a Mayflower shames an autumn leaf  
Full well she wist it could not choose but be  
If in that other's eyeshot standing she  
Should lift her looks up ever : wherewithal  
Like fires whose light fills heaven with festival  
Flamed her eyes full on Tristram's ; and he laughed  
Answering, " What wile of sweet child-hearted craft

That children forge for children, to beguile  
 Eyes known of them not witless of the wile  
 But fain to seem for sport's sake self-deceived,  
 Wilt thou find out now not to be believed ?  
 Or how shall I trust more than ouphe or elf  
 Thy truth to me-ward, who beliest thyself ? ”  
 “ Nor elf nor ouphe or aught of airier kind,”  
 Quoth she, “ though made of moonbeams moist and  
 blind,  
 Is light if weighed with man's winged weightless  
 mind.  
 Though thou keep somewise troth with me, God  
 wot,  
 When thou didst wed, I doubt, thou thoughtest not  
 So charily to keep it.” “ Nay,” said he,  
 “ Yet am not I rebukable by thee  
 As Launcelot, erring, held me ere he wist  
 No mouth save thine of mine was ever kissed  
 Save as a sister's only, since we twain  
 Drank first the draught assigned our lips to drain  
 That Fate and Love with darkling hands commixt  
 Poured, and no power to part them came betwixt,  
 But either's will, howbeit they seem at strife,  
 Was toward us one, as death itself and life  
 Are one sole doom toward all men, nor may one  
 Behold not darkness, who beholds the sun.”

“ Ah, then,” she said, “ what word is this men hear  
 Of Merlin, how some doom too strange to fear  
 Was cast but late about him oversea,  
 Sweet recreant, in thy bridal Brittany ?  
 Is not his life sealed fast on him with sleep,  
 By witchcraft of his own and love's, to keep  
 Till earth be fire and ashes ? ”

“ Surely,” said

Her lover, "not as one alive or dead  
The great good wizard, well beloved and well  
Predestinate of heaven that casts out hell  
For guerdon gentler far than all men's fate,  
Exempt alone of all predestinate,  
Takes his strange rest at heart of slumberland,  
More deep asleep in green Broceliande  
Than shipwrecked sleepers in the soft green sea  
Beneath the weight of wandering waves : but he  
Hath for those roofing waters overhead  
Above him always all the summer spread  
Or all the winter wailing : or the sweet  
Late leaves marked red with autumn's burning  
feet,  
Or withered with his weeping, round the seer  
Rain, and he sees not, nor may heed or hear  
The witness of the winter : but in spring  
He hears above him all the winds on wing  
Through the blue dawn between the brightening  
boughs,  
And on shut eyes and slumber-smitten brows  
Feels ambient change in the air and strengthening  
sun,  
And knows the soul that was his soul at one  
With the ardent world's, and in the spirit of earth  
His spirit of life reborn to mightier birth  
And mixed with things of elder life than ours ;  
With cries of birds, and kindling lamps of flowers,  
And sweep and song of winds, and fruitful light  
Of sunbeams, and the far faint breath of night,  
And waves and woods at morning : and in all,  
Soft as at noon the slow sea's rise and fall,  
He hears in spirit a song that none but he  
Hears from the mystic mouth of Nimue

Shed like a consecration ; and his heart,  
 Hearing, is made for love's sake as a part  
 Of that far singing, and the life thereof  
 Part of that life that feeds the world with love :  
 Yea, heart in heart is molten, hers and his,  
 Into the world's heart and the soul that is  
 Beyond or sense or vision ; and their breath  
 Stirs the soft springs of deathless life and death,  
 Death that bears life, and change that brings forth  
 seed

Of life to death and death to life indeed,  
 As blood recircling through the unsounded veins  
 Of earth and heaven with all their joys and pains.  
 Ah, that when love shall laugh no more nor weep  
 We too, we too might hear that song and sleep ! ”

“ Yea,” said Iseult, “ some joy it were to be  
 Lost in the sun's light and the all-girdling sea,  
 Mixed with the winds and woodlands, and to bear  
 Part in the large life of the quickening air,  
 And the sweet earth's, our mother : yet to pass  
 More fleet than mirrored faces from the glass  
 Out of all pain and all delight, so far  
 That love should seem but as the furthest star  
 Sunk deep in trembling heaven, scarce seen or  
 known,  
 As a dead moon forgotten, once that shone  
 Where now the sun shines—nay, not all things yet,  
 Not all things always, dying, would I forget.”

And Tristram answered amorously, and said :  
 “ O heart that here art mine, O heavenliest head  
 That ever took men's worship here, which art  
 Mine, how shall death put out the fire at heart,  
 Quench in men's eyes the head's remembered light,  
 That time shall set but higher in more men's sight ?

Think thou not much to die one earthly day,  
Being made not in their mould who pass away  
Nor who shall pass for ever."

" Ah," she said,

" What shall it profit me, being praised and dead ?  
What profit have the flowers of all men's praise ?  
What pleasure of our pleasure have the days  
That pour on us delight of life and mirth ?  
What fruit of all our joy on earth has earth ?  
Nor am I—nay, my lover, am I one  
To take such part in heaven's enkindling sun  
And in the inviolate air and sacred sea  
As clothes with grace that wondrous Nimue ?  
For all her works are bounties, all her deeds  
Blessings ; her days are scrolls wherein love  
reads

The record of his mercies ; heaven above  
Hath not more heavenly holiness of love  
Than earth beneath, wherever pass or pause  
Her feet that move not save by love's own laws,  
In gentleness of godlike wayfaring  
To heal men's hearts as earth is healed by spring  
Of all such woes as winter : what am I,  
Love, that have strength but to desire and die,  
That have but grace to love and do thee wrong,  
What am I that my name should live so long,  
Save as the star that crossed thy star-struck lot,  
With hers whose light was life to Launcelot ?  
Life gave she him, and strength, and fame to be  
For ever : I, what gift can I give thee ?  
Peril and sleepless watches, fearful breath  
Of dread more bitter for my sake than death  
When death came nigh to call me by my name,  
Exile, rebuke, remorse, and—O, not shame.

Shame only, this I gave thee not, whom none  
May give that worst thing ever—no, not one.  
Of all that hate, all hateful hearts that see  
Darkness for light and hate where love should be,  
None for my shame's sake may speak shame of thee."

And Tristram answering ere he kissed her smiled :  
" O very woman, god at once and child,  
What ails thee to desire of me once more  
The assurance that thou hadst in heart before ?  
For all this wild sweet waste of sweet vain breath,  
Thou knowest I know thou hast given me life, not  
death.  
The shadow of death, informed with shows of  
strife,

Was ere I won thee all I had of life.  
Light war, light love, light living, dreams in sleep,  
Joy slight and light, not glad enough to weep,  
Filled up my foolish days with sound and shine,  
Vision and gleam from strange men's cast on mine,  
Reverberate light from eyes presaging thine  
That shed but shadowy moonlight where thy face  
Now sheds forth sunshine in the deep same place,  
The deep live heart half dead and shallower then  
Than summer fords which thwart not wandering  
men.

For how should I, signed sorrow's from my birth,  
Kiss dumb the loud red laughing lips of mirth ?  
Or how, sealed thine to be, love less than heaven on  
earth ?

My heart in me was held at restless rest,  
Presageful of some prize beyond its quest,  
Prophetic still with promise, fain to find the best.  
For one was fond and one was blithe and one  
Fairer than all save twain whose peers are none ;

For third on earth is none that heaven hath seen  
 To stand with Guenevere beside my queen.  
 Not Nimue, girt with blessing as a guard :  
 Not the soft lures and laughter of Ettarde :  
 Not she, that splendour girdled round with gloom,  
 Crowned as with iron darkness of the tomb,  
 And clothed with clouding conscience of a monstrous  
 doom,  
 Whose blind incestuous love brought forth a fire  
 To burn her ere it burn its darkling sire,  
 Her mother's son, King Arthur : yet but late  
 We saw pass by that fair live shadow of fate,  
 The queen Morgause of Orkney, like a dream  
 That scares the night when moon and starry beam  
 Sicken and swoon before some sorcerer's eyes  
 Whose wordless charms defile the saintly skies,  
 Bright still with fire and pulse of blood and breath,  
 Whom her own sons have doomed for shame to  
 death."

“Death—yea,” quoth she, “there is not said or  
 heard  
 So oft aloud on earth so sure a word.  
 Death, and again death, and for each that saith  
 Ten tongues chime answer to the sound of death.  
 Good end God send us ever—so men pray.  
 But I—this end God send me, would I say,  
 To die not of division and a heart  
 Rent or with sword of severance cloven apart,  
 But only when thou diest and only where thou art,  
 O thou my soul and spirit and breath to me,  
 O light, life, love ! yea, let this only be,  
 That dying I may praise God who gave me thee,  
 Let hap what will thereafter.”

So that day

They communed, even till even was worn away,  
Nor aught they said seemed strange or sad to say,  
But sweet as night's dim dawn to weariness.  
Nor loved they life or love for death's sake less,  
Nor feared they death for love's or life's sake more  
And on the sounding soft funereal shore  
They, watching till the day should wholly die,  
Saw the far sea sweep to the far grey sky,  
Saw the long sands sweep to the long grey sea.  
And night made one sweet mist of moor and lea,  
And only far off shore the foam gave light.  
And life in them sank silent as the night.

## VII

## THE WIFE'S VIGIL

BUT all that year in Brittany forlorn,  
More sick at heart with wrath than fear of scorn  
And less in love with love than grief, and less  
With grief than pride of spirit and bitterness,  
Till all the sweet life of her blood was changed  
And all her soul from all her past estranged  
And all her will with all itself at strife  
And all her mind at war with all her life,  
Dwelt the white-handed Iseult, maid and wife,  
A mourner that for mourning robes had on  
Anger and doubt and hate of things foregone.  
For that sweet spirit of old which made her sweet  
Was parched with blasts of thought as flowers with  
heat  
And withered as with wind of evil will ;  
Though slower than frosts or fires consume or kill  
That bleak black wind vexed all her spirit still.  
As ripples reddening in the roughening breath  
Of the eager east when dawn does night to death,  
So rose and stirred and kindled in her thought  
Fierce barren fluctuant fires that lit not aught,  
But scorched her soul with yearning keen as hate  
And dreams that left her wrath disconsolate.

When change came first on that first heaven where all  
Life's hours were flowers that dawn's light hand let  
fall,

The sun that smote her dewy cloud of days  
Wrought from its showery folds his rainbow's rays,  
For love the red, for hope the gentle green,  
But yellow jealousy glared pale between.

Ere yet the sky grew heavier, and her head  
Bent flowerwise, chill with change and fancies fled,  
She saw but love arch all her heaven across with red,  
A burning bloom that seemed to breathe and beat  
And waver only as flame with rapturous heat  
Wavers ; and all the world therewith smelt sweet,  
As incense kindling from the rose-red flame :  
And when that full flush waned, and love became  
Scarce fainter, though his fading horoscope  
From certitude of sight receded, hope  
Held yet her April-coloured light aloft  
As though to lure back love, a lamp sublime and soft.  
But soon that light paled as a leaf grows pale  
And fluttered leaf-like in the gathering gale  
And melted even as dew-flakes, whose brief sheen  
The sun that gave despoils of glittering green ;  
Till harder shone 'twixt hope and love grown cold  
A sallow light like withering autumn's gold,  
The pale strong flame of jealous thought, that glows  
More deep than hope's green bloom or love's  
enkindled rose :

As though the sunflower's faint fierce disk absorbed  
The spirit and heart of starrier flowers disorbed.

That same full hour of twilight's doors unbarred  
To let bright night behold in Joyous Gard  
The glad grave eyes of lovers far away  
Watch with sweet thoughts of death the death of day

Saw lonelier by the narrower opening sea  
Sit fixed at watch Iseult of Brittany.  
As darkness from deep valleys void and bleak  
Climbs till it clothe with night the sunniest peak  
Where only of all a mystic mountain-land  
Day seems to cling yet with a trembling hand  
And yielding heart reluctant to recede,  
So, till her soul was clothed with night indeed,  
Rose the slow cloud of envious will within  
And hardening hate that held itself no sin,  
Veiled heads of vision, eyes of evil gleam,  
Dim thought on thought, and darkling dream on  
dream.

Far off she saw in spirit, and seeing abhorred,  
The likeness wrought on darkness of her lord  
Shine, and the imperial semblance at his side  
Whose shadow from her seat cast down the bride,  
Whose power and ghostly presence thrust her forth :  
Beside that unknown other sea far north  
She saw them, clearer than in present sight  
Rose on her eyes the starry shadow of night ;  
And on her heart that heaved with gathering fate  
Rose red with storm the starless shadow of hate ;  
And eyes and heart made one saw surge and swell  
The fires of sunset like the fires of hell.  
As though God's wrath would burn up sin with shame,  
The incensed red gold of deepening heaven grew  
flame :

The sweet green spaces of the soft low sky  
Faded, as fields that withering wind leaves dry :  
The sea's was like a doomsman's blasting breath  
From lips afoam with ravenous lust of death.  
A night like desolation, sombre-starred,  
Above the great walled girth of Joyous Gard

Spread forth its wide sad strength of shadow and  
gloom

Wherein those twain were compassed round with  
doom :

Hell from beneath called on them, and she heard  
Reverberate judgment in the wild wind's word  
Cry, till the sole sound of their names that rang  
Clove all the sea-mist with a clarion's clang,  
And clouds to clouds and flames to clustering flames  
Beat back the dark noise of the direful names.

Fear and strong exultation caught her breath,

And triumph like the bitterness of death,

And rapture like the rage of hate allayed

With ruin and ravin that its might hath made ;

And her heart swelled and strained itself to hear

What may be heard of no man's hungering ear,

And as a soil that cleaves in twain for drouth

Thirsted for judgment given of God's own mouth

Against them, till the strength of dark desire

Was in her as a flame of hell's own fire.

Nor seemed the wrath which held her spirit in stress

Aught else or worse than passionate holiness,

Nor the ardent hate which called on judgment's rod

More hateful than the righteousness of God.

“ How long, till thou do justice, and my wrong  
Stand expiate ? O long-suffering judge, how long ?  
Shalt thou not put him in mine hand one day  
Whom I so loved, to spare not but to slay ?  
Shalt thou not cast her down for me to tread,  
Me, on the pale pride of her humbled head ?  
Do I not well, being angry ? doth not hell  
Require them ? yea, thou knowest that I do well.  
Is not thy seal there set of bloodred light  
For witness on the brows of day and night ?

Who shall unseal it? what shall melt away  
Thy signet from the doors of night and day?  
No man, nor strength of any spirit above,  
Nor prayer, nor ardours of adulterous love.  
Thou art God, the strong lord over body and soul:  
Hast thou not in the terrors of thy scroll  
All names of all men written as with fire?  
Thine only breath bids time and space respire:  
And are not all things evil in them done  
More clear in thine eyes than in ours the sun?  
Hast thou not sight stretched wide enough to see  
These that offend it, these at once and me?  
Is thine arm shortened or thine hand struck down  
As palsied? have thy brows not strength to frown?  
Are thine eyes blind with film of withering age?  
Burns not thine heart with righteousness of rage  
Yet, and the royal rancour toward thy foes  
Retributive of ruin? Time should close,  
Thou said'st, and earth fade as a leaf grows grey,  
Ere one word said of thine should pass away.  
Was this then not thy word, thou God most high,  
That sin shall surely bring forth death and die,  
Seeing how these twain live and have joy of life,  
His harlot and the man that made me wife?  
For is it I, perchance, I that have sinned?  
Me, peradventure, should thy wasting wind  
Smite, and thy sun blast, and thy storms devour  
Me with keen fangs of lightning? should thy power  
Put forth on me the weight of its awakening hour?  
Shall I that bear this burden bear that weight  
Of judgment? is my sin against thee great,  
If all my heart against them burn with all its hate?  
Thine, and not mine, should hate be? nay, but me  
They have spoiled and scoffed at, who can touch not  
thee.

Me, me, the fullness of their joy drains dry,  
Their fruitfulness makes barren : thou, not I,  
Lord, is it, whom their wrongdoing clothes with shame  
That all who speak shoot tongues out at thy name  
As all who hear mock mine ? Make me thy sword  
At least, if even thou too be wronged, O Lord,  
At all of these that wrong me : make mine hand  
As lightning, or my tongue a fiery brand,  
To burn or smite them with thy wrath : behold,  
I have nought on earth save thee for hope or hold,  
Fail me not thou : I have nought but this to crave,  
Make me thy mean to give them to the grave,  
Thy sign that all men seeing may speak thee just,  
Thy word which turns the strengths of sin to dust,  
Thy blast which burns up towers and thrones with  
fire.

Lord, is this gift, this grace that I require,  
So great a gift, Lord, for thy grace to give  
And bid me bear thy part retributive ?  
That I whom scorn makes mouths at, I might be  
Thy witness if loud sin may mock at thee ?  
For lo, my life is as a barren ear  
Plucked from the sheaf : dark days drive past me here  
Downtrodden, while joy's reapers pile their sheaves,  
A thing more vile than autumn's weariest leaves,  
For these the sun filled once with sap of life.  
O thou my lord that hadst me to thy wife,  
Dost thou not fear at all, remembering me,  
The love that bowed my whole soul down to thee ?  
Is this so wholly nought for man to dread,  
Man, whose life walks between the quick and dead,  
Naked, and warred about with wind and sea,  
That one should love and hate as I do thee ?  
That one should live in all the world his foe  
So mortal as the hate that loves him so ?

Nought, is it nought, O husband, O my knight,  
 O strong man and indomitable in fight,  
 That one more weak than foam-bells on the sea  
 Should have in heart such thoughts as I of thee ?  
 Thou art bound about with stately strengths for  
 bands :  
 What strength shall keep thee from my strengthless  
 hands ?  
 Thou art girt about with goodly guards and great :  
 What fosse may fence thee round as deep as hate ?  
 Thou art wise : will wisdom teach thee fear of me ?  
 Thou art great of heart : shall this deliver thee ?  
 What wall so massive, or what tower so high,  
 Shall be thy surety that thou shouldst not die,  
 If that which comes against thee be but I ?  
 Who shall rise up of power to take thy part,  
 What skill find strength to save, what strength find  
 art,  
 If that which wars against thee be my heart ?  
 Not iron, nor the might of force afield,  
 Nor edge of sword, nor sheltering weight of shield,  
 Nor all thy fame since all thy praise began,  
 Nor all the love and laud thou hast of man,  
 Nor, though his noiseless hours with wool be shod,  
 Shall God's love keep thee from the wrath of God.  
 O son of sorrows, hast thou said at heart,  
 Haply, God loves thee, God shall take thy part,  
 Who hath all these years endured thee, since thy  
 birth  
 From sorrow's womb bade sin be born on earth ?  
 So long he hath cast his buckler over thee,  
 Shall he not surely guard thee even from me ?  
 Yea, but if yet he give thee while I live  
 Into mine hands as he shall surely give,

Ere death at last bring darkness on thy face,  
Call then on him, call not on me for grace,  
Cast not away one prayer, one suppliant breath,  
On me that commune all this while with death.  
For I that was not and that was thy wife  
Desire not but one hour of all thy life  
Wherein to triumph till that hour be past ;  
But this mine hour I look for is thy last."

So mused she till the fire in sea and sky  
Sank, and the northwest wind spake harsh on high,  
And like the sea's heart waxed her heart that heard,  
Strong, dark, and bitter, till the keen wind's word  
Seemed of her own soul spoken, and the breath  
All round her not of darkness, but of death.

## VIII

## THE LAST PILGRIMAGE

ENOUGH of ease, O Love, enough of light,  
 Enough of rest before the shadow of night.  
 Strong Love, whom death finds feebler ; kingly Love.  
 Whom time discrowns in season, seeing thy dove  
 Spell-stricken by the serpent ; for thy sake  
 These that saw light see night's dawn only break,  
 Night's cup filled up with slumber, whence men think  
 The draught more dread than thine was dire to drink.  
 O Love, thy day sets darkling : hope and fear  
 Fall from thee standing stern as death stands here.

For what have these to do with fear or hope  
 On whom the gates of outer darkness ope,  
 On whom the door of life's desire is barred ?  
 Past like a cloud, their days in Joyous Gard  
 Gleam like a cloud the westering sun stains red  
 Till all the blood of day's blithe heart be bled  
 And all night's heart requickened ; in their eyes  
 So flame and fade those far memorial skies,  
 So shines the moorland, so revives the sea,  
 Whereon they gazing mused of things to be  
 And wist not more of them than waters know  
 What wind with next day's change of tide shall  
 blow.

Dark roll the deepening days whose waves divide  
Unseasonably, with storm-struck change of tide,  
Tristram from Iseult : nor may sorrow say  
If better wind shall blow than yesterday  
With next day risen or any day to come.  
For ere the songs of summer's death fell dumb,  
And autumn bade the imperial moorlands change  
Their purples, and the bracken's bloom grow strange  
As hope's green blossom touched with time's harsh  
rust,  
Was all their joy of life shaken to dust,  
And all its fire made ashes : by the strand  
Where late they strayed and communed hand from  
hand  
For the last time fell separate, eyes of eyes  
Took for the last time leave, and saw the skies  
Dark with their deep division. The last time—  
The last that ever love's rekindling rhyme  
Should keep for them life's days and nights in tune  
With reflux of the morning and the moon  
Alternative in music, and make one  
The secrets of the stardawn and the sun  
For these twain souls ere darkness held them fast ;  
The last before the labour marked for last  
And toil of utmost knighthood, till the wage  
Of rest might crown his crowning pilgrimage  
Whereon forth faring must he take farewell,  
With spear for staff and sword for scallop-shell  
And scrip wherein close memory hoarded yet  
Things holier held than death might well forget ;  
The last time ere the travel were begun  
Whose goal is unbehilden of the sun,  
The last wherewith love's eyes might yet be lit,  
Came, and they could but dream they knew not it.

For Tristram parting from her wist at heart  
How well she wist they might not choose but part,  
And he pass forth a pilgrim, when there came  
A sound of summons in the high king's name  
For succour toward his vassal Triamour,  
King in wild Wales, now spoiled of all his power.  
As Tristram's father ere his fair son's birth,  
By one the strongest of the sons of earth,  
Urgan, an iron bulk of giant mould :  
And Iseult in Tintagel as of old  
Sat crowned with state and sorrow : for her lord  
At Arthur's hand required her back restored,  
And willingly compelled against her will  
She yielded, saying within her own soul still  
Some season yet of soft or stormier breath  
Should haply give her life again or death :  
For now nor quick nor dead nor bright nor dark  
Were all her nights and days wherein King Mark  
Held haggard watch upon her, and his eyes  
Were cloudier than the gradual wintering skies  
That closed about the wan wild land and sea.  
And bitter toward him waxed her heart : but he  
Was rent in twain betwixt harsh love and hate  
With pain and passion half compassionate  
That yearned and laboured to be quit of shame,  
And could not : and his life grew smouldering flame.  
And hers a cloud full-charged with storm and  
shower,  
Though touched with trembling gleams of fire's bright  
flower  
That flashed and faded on its fitful verge,  
As hope would strive with darkness and emerge  
And sink, a swimmer strangled by the swallowing  
surge.

But Tristram by dense hills and deepening vales  
Rode through the wild glad wastes of glorious  
Wales,  
High-hearted with desire of happy fight  
And strong in soul with merrier sense of might  
Than since the fair first years that hailed him  
knight :  
For all his will was toward the war, so long  
Had love repressed and wrought his glory wrong,  
So far the triumph and so fair the praise  
Seemed now that kindled all his April days.  
And here in bright blown autumn, while his life  
Was summer's yet for strength toward love or strife,  
Blithe waxed his hope toward battle, and high desire  
To pluck once more as out of circling fire  
Fame, the broad flower whose breath makes death  
more sweet  
Than roses crushed by love's receding feet.  
But all the lovely land wherein he went  
The blast of ruin and ravenous war had rent ;  
And black with fire the fields where homesteads were,  
And foul with festering dead the high soft air,  
And loud with wail of women many a stream  
Whose own live song was like love's deepening  
dream,  
Spake all against the spoiler : wherefore still  
Wrath waxed with pity, quickening all his will,  
In Tristram's heart for every league he rode  
Through the aching land so broad a curse bestrode  
With so supreme a shadow : till one dawn  
Above the green bloom of a gleaming lawn,  
High on the strait steep windy bridge that spanned  
A glen's deep mouth, he saw that shadow stand  
Visible, sword on thigh and mace in hand

Vast as the mid bulk of a roof-tree's beam.  
So, sheer above the wild wolf-haunted stream,  
Dire as the face disfeatured of a dream,  
Rose Urgan : and his eyes were night and flame ;  
But like the fiery dawn were his that came  
Against him, lit with more sublime desire  
Than lifts toward heaven the leaping heart of fire :  
And strong in vantage of his perilous place  
The huge high presence, red as earth's first race,  
Reared like a reed the might up of his mace,  
And smote : but lightly Tristram swerved, and  
drove  
Right in on him, whose void stroke only clove  
Air, and fell wide, thundering athwart : and he  
Sent forth a stormier cry than wind or sea  
When midnight takes the tempest for her lord  
And all the glen's throat seemed as hell's that  
roared ;  
But high like heaven's light over hell shone  
Tristram's sword,  
Falling, and bright as storm shows God's bare  
brand  
Flashed as it shore sheer off the huge right hand  
Whose strength was as the shadow of death on all  
that land.  
And like the trunk of some grim tree sawn through  
Reeled Urgan, as his left hand grasped and drew  
A steel by sorcerers tempered : and anew  
Raged the red wind of fluctuant fight, till all  
The cliffs were thrilled as by the clangorous call  
Of storm's blown trumpets from the core of night,  
Charging : and even as with the storm-wind's might  
On Tristram's helm that sword crashed : and the  
knight

Fell, and his arms clashed, and a wide cry brake  
From those far off that heard it, for his sake  
Soul-stricken : and that bulk of monstrous birth  
Sent forth again a cry more dire for mirth :  
But ere the sunbright arms were soiled of earth  
They flashed again, re-risen : and swift and loud  
Rang the strokes out as from a circling cloud,  
So dense the dust wrought over them its drifted  
shroud.

Strong strokes, within the mist their battle made,  
Each hailed on other through the shifting shade  
That clung about them hurtling as the swift fight  
swayed :

And each between the jointed corslet saw  
Break forth his foe's bright blood at each grim flaw  
Steel made in hammered iron : till again  
The fiend put forth his might more strong for pain  
And cleft the great knight's glittering shield in  
twain,

Laughing for very wrath and thirst to kill,  
A beast's broad laugh of blind and wolfish will,  
And smote again ere Tristram's lips drew breath  
Panting, and swept as by the sense of death,  
That surely should have touched and sealed them  
fast

Save that the sheer stroke shrilled aside, and passed  
Frustate : but answering Tristram smote anew,  
And thrust the brute breast as with lightning through  
Clean with one cleaving stroke of perfect might :  
And violently the vast bulk leapt upright,  
And plunged over the bridge, and fell : and all  
The cliffs reverberate from his monstrous fall  
Rang : and the land by Tristram's grace was free.  
So with high laud and honour thence went he,

And southward set his sail again, and passed  
The lone land's ending, first beheld and last  
Of eyes that look on England from the sea :  
And his heart mourned within him, knowing how  
she  
Whose heart with his was fatefully made fast  
Sat now fast bound, as though some charm were  
cast  
About her, such a brief space eastward thence,  
And yet might soul not break the bonds of sense  
And bring her to him in very life and breath  
More than had this been even the sea of death  
That washed between them, and its wide sweet  
light  
The dim strait's darkness of the narrowing night  
That shuts about men dying whose souls put forth  
To pierce its passage through : but south and north  
Alike for him were other than they were :  
For all the northward coast shone smooth and fair,  
And off its iron cliffs the keen-edged air  
Blew summer, kindling from her mute bright mouth ;  
But winter breathed out of the murmuring south,  
Where, pale with wrathful watch on passing ships,  
The lone wife lay in wait with wan dumb lips.  
Yet, sailing where the shoreward ripple curled  
Of the most wild sweet waves in all the world,  
His soul took comfort even for joy to see  
The strong deep joy of living sun and sea,  
The large deep love of living sea and land,  
As past the lonely lion-guarded strand  
Where that huge warder lifts his couchant sides,  
Asleep, above the sleepless lapse of tides,  
The light sail swept, and past the unsounded caves  
Unsearchable, wherein the pulse of waves

Throbs through perpetual darkness to and fro,  
And the blind night swims heavily below  
While heavily the strong noon broods above,  
Even to the very bay whence very Love,  
Strong daughter of the giant gods who wrought  
Sun, earth, and sea out of their procreant thought,  
Most meetly might have risen, and most divine  
Beheld and heard things round her sound and shine  
From floors of foam and gold to walls of serpentine.  
For splendid as the limbs of that supreme  
Incarnate beauty through men's visions gleam,  
Whereof all fairest things are even but shadow or  
dream,  
And lovely like as Love's own heavenliest face,  
Gleams there and glows the presence and the grace  
Even of the mother of all, in perfect pride of place.  
For otherwhere beneath our world-wide sky  
There may not be beheld of men that die  
Aught else like this that dies not, nor may stress  
Of ages that bow down men's works make less  
The exultant awe that clothes with power its loveli-  
ness.  
For who sets eye thereon soever knows  
How since these rocks and waves first rolled and rose  
The marvel of their many-coloured might  
Hath borne this record sensible to sight,  
The witness and the symbol of their own delight,  
The gospel graven of life's most heavenly law,  
Joy, brooding on its own still soul with awe,  
A sense of godlike rest in godlike strife,  
The sovereign conscience of the spirit of life.  
Nor otherwhere on strand or mountain tower  
Hath such fair beauty shining forth in flower  
Put on the imperial robe of such imperious power.

For all the radiant rocks from depth to height  
Burn with vast bloom of glories blossom-bright  
As though the sun's own hand had thrilled them  
    through with light  
And stained them through with splendour: yet from  
    thence  
Such awe strikes rapture through the spirit of  
    sense  
From all the inaccessible sea-wall's girth,  
That exultation, bright at heart as mirth,  
Bows deeper down before the beauty of earth  
Than fear may bow down ever: nor shall one  
Who meets at Alpine dawn the mounting sun  
On heights too high for many a wing to climb  
Be touched with sense of aught seen more sublime  
Than here smiles high and sweet in face of heaven  
    and time.  
For here the flower of fire, the soft hoar bloom  
Of springtide olive-woods, the warm green gloom  
Of clouded seas that swell and sound with dawn of  
    doom,  
The keen thwart lightning and the wan grey light  
Of stormy sunrise crossed and vexed with night,  
Flash, loom, and laugh with divers hues in one  
From all the curved cliff's face, till day be done,  
Against the sea's face and the gazing sun.  
And whensoever a strong wave, high in hope,  
Sweeps up some smooth slant breadth of stone  
    aslope,  
That glowed with duskier fire of hues less bright,  
Swift as it sweeps back springs to sudden sight  
The splendour of the moist rock's fervent light,  
Fresh as from dew of birth when time was born  
Out of the world-conceiving womb of morn.

All its quenched flames and darkling hues divine  
Leap into lustrous life and laugh and shine  
And darken into swift and dim decline  
For one brief breath's space till the next wave run  
Right up, and ripple down again, undone,  
And leave it to be kissed and kindled of the sun.  
And all these things, bright as they shone before  
Man first set foot on earth or sail from shore,  
Rose not less radiant than the sun sees now  
When the autumn sea was cloven of Tristram's prow,  
And strong in sorrow and hope and woful will  
That hope might move not nor might sorrow kill  
He held his way back toward the wild sad shore  
Whence he should come to look on these no more,  
Nor ever, save with sunless eyes shut fast,  
Sail home to sleep in home-born earth at last.

And all these things fled fleet as light or breath  
Past, and his heart waxed cold and dull as death,  
Or swelled but as the tides of sorrow swell,  
To sink with sullen sense of slow farewell.  
So surely seemed the silence even to sigh  
Assurance of inveterate prophecy,  
"Thou shalt not come again home hither ere thou  
die."  
And the wind mourned and triumphed, and the sea  
Waisted and took heart and trembled ; nor might he  
Hear more of comfort in their speech, or see  
More certitude in all the waste world's range  
Than the only certitude of death and change.  
And as the sense and semblance fluctuated  
Of all things heard and seen alive or dead  
That smote far off upon his ears or eyes  
Or memory mixed with forecasts fain to rise  
And fancies faint as ghostliest prophecies,

So seemed his own soul, changefully forlorn,  
To shrink and triumph and mount up and mourn ;  
Yet all its fitful waters, clothed with night,  
Lost heart not wholly, lacked not wholly light,  
Seeing over life and death one star in sight  
Where evening's gates as fair as morning's ope,  
Whose name was memory, but whose flame was hope.  
For all the tides of thought that rose and sank  
Felt its fair strength wherefrom strong sorrow shrank  
A mightier trust than time could change or cloy,  
More strong than sorrow, more secure than joy.  
So came he, nor content nor all unblest,  
Back to the grey old land of Merlin's rest.

But ere six paces forth on shore he trod  
Before him stood a knight with feet unshod,  
And kneeling called upon him, as on God  
Might sick men call for pity, praying aloud  
With hands held up and head made bare and bowed ;  
" Tristram, for God's love and thine own dear fame,  
I Tristram that am one with thee in name  
And one in heart with all that praise thee—I,  
Most woful man of all that may not die  
For heartbreak and the heavier scourge of shame,  
By all thy glory done our woful name  
Beseech thee, called of all men gentlest knight,  
Be now not slow to do my sorrows right.  
I charge thee for thy fame's sake through this land,  
I pray thee by thine own wife's fair white hand,  
Have pity of me whose love is borne away  
By one that makes of poor men's lives his prey,  
A felon masked with knighthood : at his side  
Seven brethren hath he night or day to ride  
With seven knights more that wait on all his will :  
And here at hand, ere yet one day fulfil

Its flight through light and darkness, shall they fare  
Forth, and my bride among them, whom they bear  
Through these wild lands his prisoner ; and if now  
I lose her, and my prayer be vain, and thou  
Less fain to serve love's servants than of yore,  
Then surely shall I see her face no more.  
But if thou wilt, for love's sake of the bride  
Who lay most loved of women at thy side,  
Strike with me, straight then hence behoves us ride  
And rest between the moorside and the sea  
Where we may smite them passing : but for me,  
Poor stranger, me not worthy scarce to touch  
Thy kind strong hand, how shouldst thou do so much ?  
For now lone left this long time waits thy wife  
And lacks her lord and light of wedded life  
Whilst thou far off art famous : yet thy fame,  
If thou take pity on me that bear thy name  
Unworthily, but by that name implore  
Thy grace, how shall not even thy fame grow more ?  
But be thy will as God's among us done,  
Who art far in fame above us as the sun :  
Yet only of him have all men help and grace."

And all the lordly light of Tristram's face  
Was softened as the sun's in kindly spring.  
" Nay, then may God send me as evil a thing  
When I give ear not to such prayers," he said,  
" And make my place among the nameless dead  
When I put back one hour the time to smite  
And do the unrighteous griefs of good men right  
Behold, I will not enter in nor rest  
Here in mine own halls till this piteous quest  
Find end ere noon to-morrow : but do thou,  
Whose sister's face I may not look on now,  
Go, Ganhardine, with tiding of the vow

That bids me turn aside for one day's strife  
Or live dishonoured all my days of life,  
And greet for me in brother's wise my wife,  
And crave her pardon that for knighthood's sake  
And womanhood's, whose bands may no man break  
And keep the bands of bounden honour fast,  
I seek not her till two nights yet be past  
And this my quest accomplished, so God please  
By me to give this young man's anguish ease  
And on his wrongdoer's head his wrong requite."

And Tristram with that woful thankful knight  
Rode by the seaside moorland wastes away  
Between the quickening night and darkening day  
Ere half the gathering stars had heart to shine.  
And lightly toward his sister Ganhardine  
Sped, where she sat and gazed alone afar  
Above the grey sea for the sunset star,  
And lightly kissed her hand and lightly spake  
His tiding of that quest for knighthood's sake.  
And the white-handed Iseult, bowing her head,  
Gleamed on him with a glance athwart, and said,  
"As God's on earth and far above the sun,  
So toward his handmaid be my lord's will done."  
And doubts too dim to question or divine  
Touched as with shade the spirit of Ganhardine,  
Hearing ; and scarce for half a doubtful breath  
His bright light heart held half a thought of death  
And knew not whence this darkling thought might be,  
But surely not his sister's work : for she  
Was ever sweet and good as summer air,  
And soft as dew when all the night is fair,  
And gracious as the golden maiden moon  
When darkness craves her blessing : so full soon

His mind was light again as leaping waves,  
Nor dreamed that hers was like a field of graves  
Where no man's foot dares swerve to left or right,  
Nor ear dares hearken, nor dares eye take sight  
Of aught that moves and murmurs there at night.

But by the sea-banks where at morn their foes  
Might find them, lay those knightly name-fellows,  
One sick with grief of heart and sleepless, one  
With heart of hope triumphant as the sun  
Dreaming asleep of love and fame and fight :  
But sleep at last wrapped warm the wan young  
knight ;

And Tristram with the first pale windy light  
Woke ere the sun spake summons, and his ear  
Caught the sea's call that fired his heart to hear,  
A noise of waking waters : for till dawn  
The sea was silent as a mountain lawn  
When the wind speaks not, and the pines are dumb,  
And summer takes her fill ere autumn come  
Of life more soft than slumber : but ere day  
Rose, and the first beam smote the bounding bay,  
Up sprang the strength of the dark East, and took  
With its wide wings the waters as they shook,  
And hurled them huddling on aheap, and cast  
The full sea shoreward with a great glad blast,  
Blown from the heart of morning : and with joy  
Full-souled and perfect passion, as a boy  
That leaps up light to wrestle with the sea  
For pure heart's gladness and large ecstasy,  
Up sprang the might of Tristram ; and his soul  
Yearned for delight within him, and waxed whole  
As a young child's with rapture of the hour  
That brought his spirit and all the world to flower,

And all the bright blood in his veins beat time  
To the wind's clarion and the water's chime  
That called him and he followed it and stood  
On the sand's verge before the grey great flood  
Where the white hurtling heads of waves that met  
Rose unsaluted of the sunrise yet.

And from his heart's root outward shot the sweet  
Strong joy that thrilled him to the hands and feet,  
Filling his limbs with pleasure and glad might,  
And his soul drank the immeasurable delight  
That earth drinks in with morning, and the free  
Limitless love that lifts the stirring sea  
When on her bare bright bosom as a bride  
She takes the young sun, perfect in his pride,  
Home to his place with passion: and the heart  
Trembled for joy within the man whose part  
Was here not least in living; and his mind  
Was rapt abroad beyond man's meaner kind  
And pierced with love of all things and with mirth  
Moved to make one with heaven and heavenlike earth  
And with the light live water. So awhile  
He watched the dim sea with a deepening smile,  
And felt the sound and savour and swift flight  
Of waves that fled beneath the fading night  
And died before the darkness, like a song  
With harps between and trumpets blown along  
Through the loud air of some triumphant day,  
Sink through his spirit and purge all sense away  
Save of the glorious gladness of his hour  
And all the world about to break in flower  
Before the sovereign laughter of the sun;  
And he, ere night's wide work lay all undone,  
As earth from her bright body casts off night,  
Cast off his raiment for a rapturous fight

And stood between the sea's edge and the sea  
Naked, and godlike of his mould as he  
Whose swift foot's sound shook all the towers of  
Troy ;  
So clothed with might, so girt upon with joy  
As, ere the knife had shorn to feed the fire  
His glorious hair before the unkindled pyre  
Whereon the half of his great heart was laid,  
Stood, in the light of his live limbs arrayed,  
Child of heroic earth and heavenly sea,  
The flower of all men : scarce less bright than he,  
If any of all men latter-born might stand,  
Stood Tristram, silent, on the glimmering strand.  
Not long : but with a cry of love that rang  
As from a trumpet golden-mouthed, he sprang,  
As toward a mother's where his head might rest  
Her child rejoicing, toward the strong sea's breast  
That none may gird nor measure : and his heart  
Sent forth a shout that bade his lips not part,  
But triumphed in him silent : no man's voice,  
No song, no sound of clarions that rejoice,  
Can set that glory forth which fills with fire  
The body and soul that have their whole desire  
Silent, and freer than birds or dreams are free  
Take all their will of all the encountering sea.  
And toward the foam he bent and forward smote,  
Laughing, and launched his body like a boat  
Full to the sea-breach, and against the tide  
Struck strongly forth with amorous arms made  
wide  
To take the bright breast of the wave to his  
And on his lips the sharp sweet minute's kiss  
Given of the wave's lip for a breath's space curled  
And pure as at the daydawn of the world.

And round him all the bright rough shuddering sea  
Kindled, as though the world were even as he,  
Heart-stung with exultation of desire :  
And all the life that moved him seemed to aspire,  
As all the sea's life toward the sun : and still  
Delight within him waxed with quickening will  
More smooth and strong and perfect as a flame  
That springs and spreads, till each glad limb became  
A note of rapture in the tune of life,  
Live music mild and keen as sleep and strife :  
Till the sweet change that bids the sense grow sure  
Of deeper depth and purity more pure  
Wrapped him and lapped him round with clearer cold,  
And all the rippling green grew royal gold  
Between him and the far sun's rising rim.  
And like the sun his heart rejoiced in him,  
And brightened with a broadening flame of mirth :  
And hardly seemed its life a part of earth,  
But the life kindled of a fiery birth  
And passion of a new-begotten son  
Between the live sea and the living sun.  
And mightier grew the joy to meet full-faced  
Each wave, and mount with upward plunge, and taste  
The rapture of its rolling strength, and cross  
Its flickering crown of snows that flash and toss  
Like plumes in battle's blithest charge, and thence  
To match the next with yet more strenuous sense ;  
Till on his eyes the light beat hard and bade  
His face turn west and shoreward through the glad  
Swift revel of the waters golden-clad,  
And back with light reluctant heart he bore  
Across the broad-backed rollers in to shore ;  
Strong-spirited for the chance and cheer of fight,  
And donned his arms again, and felt the might

In all his limbs rejoice for strength, and praised  
God for such life as that whereon he gazed,  
And wist not surely its joy was even as fleet  
As that which laughed and lapsed against his feet,  
The bright thin grey foam-blossom, glad and hoar,  
That flings its flower along the flowerless shore  
On sand or shingle, and still with sweet strange snows,  
As where one great white storm-dishevelled rose  
May rain her wild leaves on a windy land,  
Strews for long leagues the sounding slope of strand,  
And flower on flower falls flashing, and anew  
A fresh light leaps up whence the last flash flew,  
And casts its brief glad gleam of life away  
To fade not flowerwise but as drops the day  
Storm-smitten, when at once the dark devours  
Heaven and the sea and earth with all their flowers ;  
No star in heaven, on earth no rose to see,  
But the white blown brief blossoms of the sea,  
That make her green gloom starrier than the sky,  
Dance yet before the tempest's tune, and die.  
And all these things he glanced upon, and knew  
How fair they shone, from earth's least flake of dew  
To stretch of seas and imminence of skies,  
Unwittingly, with unpresageful eyes,  
For the last time. The world's half heavenly face,  
The music of the silence of the place,  
The confluence and the reflux of the sea,  
The wind's note ringing over wold and lea,  
Smote once more through him keen as fire that smote,  
Rang once more through him one reverberate note,  
That faded as he turned again and went,  
Fulfilled by strenuous joy with strong content,  
To take his last delight of labour done  
That yet should be beholden of the sun

Or ever give man comfort of his hand.

Beside a wood's edge in the broken land  
An hour at wait the twain together stood,  
Till swift between the moorside and the wood  
Flashed the spears forward of the coming train ;  
And seeing beside the strong chief spoiler's rein  
His wan love riding prisoner in the crew,  
Forth with a cry the young man leapt, and flew  
Right on that felon sudden as a flame ;  
And hard at hand the mightier Tristram came,  
Bright as the sun and terrible as fire :  
And there had sword and spear their soul's desire,  
And blood that quenched the spear's thirst as it poured  
Slaked royally the hunger of the sword,  
Till the fierce heart of steel could scarce fulfil  
Its greed and ravin of insatiate will.  
For three the fiery spear of Tristram drove  
Down ere a point of theirs his harness clove  
Or its own sheer mid shaft splintered in twain :  
And his heart bounded in him, and was fain  
As fire or wind that takes its fill by night  
Of tempest and of triumph : so the knight  
Rejoiced and ranged among them, great of hand,  
Till seven lay slain upon the heathery sand  
Or in the dense breadth of the woodside fern.  
Nor did his heart not mightier in him burn  
Seeing at his hand that young knight fallen, and high  
The red sword reared again that bade him die.  
But on the slayer exulting like the flame  
Whose foot foreshines the thunder Tristram came  
Raging, for piteous wrath had made him fire ;  
And as a lion's look his face was dire  
That flashed against his foeman ere the sword  
Lightened and wrought the heart's will of its lord,

And clove through casque and crown the wrongdoer's head.

And right and left about their dark chief dead  
Hurtled and hurled those felons to and fro,  
Till as a storm-wind scatters leaves and snow  
His right hand ravening scattered them ; but one  
That fled with sidelong glance athwart the sun  
Shot, and the shaft flew sure, and smote aright,  
Full in the wound's print of his great first fight  
When at his young strength's peril he made free  
Cornwall, and slew beside its bordering sea  
The fair land's foe, who yielding up his breath  
Yet left him wounded nigh to dark slow death.  
And hardly with long toil thence he won home  
Between the grey moor and the glimmering foam,  
And halting fared through his own gate, and fell,  
Thirsting : for as the sleepless fire of hell  
The fire within him of his wound again  
Burned, and his face was dark as death for pain,  
And blind the blithe light of his eyes : but they  
Within that watched and wist not of the fray  
Came forth and cried aloud on him for woe.  
And scarce aloud his thanks fell faint and slow  
As men reared up the strong man fallen and bore  
Down the deep hall that looked along the shore,  
And laid him soft abed, and sought in vain  
If herb or hand of leech might heal his pain.  
And the white-handed Iseult hearkening heard  
All, and drew nigh, and spake no wifely word,  
But gazed upon him doubtfully, with eyes  
Clouded ; and he in kindly knightly wise  
Spake with scant breath, and smiling : " Surely this  
Is penance for discourteous lips to kiss

And feel the brand burn through them, here to lie  
And lack the strength here to do more than sigh  
And hope not hence for pardon." Then she bowed  
Her head, still silent as a stooping cloud,  
And laid her lips against his face ; and he  
Felt sink a shadow across him as the sea  
Might feel a cloud stoop toward it : and his heart  
Darkened as one that wastes by sorcerous art  
And knows not whence it withers : and he turned  
Back from her emerald eyes his own, and yearned  
All night for eyes all golden : and the dark  
Hung sleepless round him till the loud first lark  
Rang record forth once more of darkness done,  
And all things born took comfort from the sun.

## IX

## THE SAILING OF THE SWAN

FATE, that was born ere spirit and flesh were made,  
The fire that fills man's life with light and shade ;  
The power beyond all godhead which puts on  
All forms of multitudinous unison,  
A raiment of eternal change inwrought  
With shapes and hues more subtly spun than thought,  
Where all things old bear fruit of all things new  
And one deep chord throbs all the music through,  
The chord of change unchanging, shadow and light  
Inseparable as reverberate day from night ;  
Fate, that of all things save the soul of man  
Is lord and God since body and soul began ;  
Fate, that keeps all the tune of things in chime ;  
Fate, that breathes power upon the lips of time ;  
That smites and soothes with heavy and healing hand  
All joys and sorrows born in life's dim land,  
Till joy be found a shadow and sorrow a breath  
And life no discord in the tune with death,  
But all things fain alike to die and live  
In pulse and lapse of tides alternative,  
Through silence and through sound of peace and strife,  
Till birth and death be one in sight of life ;  
Fate, heard and seen of no man's eyes or ears,  
To no man shown through light of smiles or tears,

And moved of no man's prayer to fold its wings ;  
Fate, that is night and light on worldly things ;  
Fate, that is fire to burn and sea to drown,  
Strength to build up and thunder to cast down ;  
Fate, shield and screen for each man's lifelong head,  
And sword at last or dart that strikes it dead ;  
Fate, higher than heaven and deeper than the grave,  
That saves and spares not, spares and doth not save ;  
Fate, that in gods' wise is not bought and sold  
For prayer or price of penitence or gold ;  
Whose law shall live when life bids earth farewell,  
Whose justice hath for shadows heaven and hell.  
Whose judgment into no god's hand is given,  
Nor is its doom not more than hell or heaven :  
Fate, that is pure of love and clean of hate,  
Being equal-eyed as nought may be but fate ;  
Through many and weary days of foiled desire  
Leads life to rest where tears no more take fire ;  
Through many and weary dreams of quenched delight  
Leads life through death past sense of day and night.

Nor shall they feel or fear, whose date is done,  
Aught that made once more dark the living sun  
And bitterer in their breathing lips the breath  
Than the dark dawn and bitter dust of death.  
For all the light, with fragrance as of flowers,  
That clothes the lithe live limbs of separate hours,  
More sweet to savour and more clear to sight  
Dawns on the soul death's undivided night.  
No vigils has that perfect night to keep,  
No fever-fits of vision shake that sleep.  
Nor if they wake, and any place there be  
Wherein the soul may feel her wings beat free  
Through air too clear and still for sound or strife  
If life were haply death, and death be life ;

If love with yet some lovelier laugh revive,  
And song relume the light it bore alive,  
And friendship, found of all earth's gifts most good,  
Stand perfect in perpetual brotherhood ;  
If aught indeed at all of all this be,  
Though none might say nor any man might see,  
Might he that sees the shade thereof not say  
This dream were trustier than the truth of day.  
Nor haply may not hope, with heart more clear,  
Burn deathward, and the doubtful soul take cheer,  
Seeing through the channelled darkness yearn a  
star

Whose eyebeams are not as the morning's are,  
Transient, and subjugate of lordlier light,  
But all unconquerable by noon or night,  
Being kindled only of life's own inmost fire,  
Truth, stablished and made sure by strong desire.  
Fountain of all things living, source and seed,  
Force that perforce transfigures dream to deed  
God that begets on time, the body of death,  
Eternity : nor may man's darkening breath,  
Albeit it stain, disfigure or destroy  
The glass wherein the soul sees life and joy  
Only, with strength renewed and spirit of youth,  
And brighter than the sun's the body of Truth  
Eternal, unimaginable of man,  
Whose very face not Thought's own eyes may scan,  
But see far off his radiant feet at least,  
Trampling the head of Fear, the false high priest,  
Whose broken chalice foams with blood no more,  
And prostrate on that high priest's chancel floor,  
Bruised, overthrown, blind, maimed, with bloodless  
rod,  
The miscreation of his miscreant God.

That sovereign shadow cast of souls that dwell  
In darkness and the prison-house of hell  
Whose walls are built of deadly dread, and bound  
The gates thereof with dreams as iron round,  
And all the bars therein and stanchions wrought  
Of shadow forged like steel and tempered thought  
And words like swords and thunder-clouded creeds  
And faiths more dire than sin's most direful deeds :  
That shade accursed and worshipped, which hath  
made

The soul of man that brought it forth a shade  
Black as the womb of darkness, void and vain,  
A throne for fear, a pasturage for pain,  
Impotent, abject, clothed upon with lies,  
A foul blind fume of words and prayers that rise,  
Aghast and harsh, abhorrent and abhorred,  
Fierce as its God, blood-saturate as its Lord ;  
With loves and mercies on its lips that hiss  
Comfort, and kill compassion with a kiss,  
And strike the world black with their blasting breath ;  
That ghost whose core of life is very death  
And all its light of heaven a shadow of hell,  
Fades, falls, wanes, withers by none other spell  
But theirs whose eyes and ears have seen and heard  
Not the face naked, not the perfect word,  
But the bright sound and feature felt from far  
Of life which feeds the spirit and the star,  
Thrills the live light of all the suns that roll,  
And stirs the still sealed springs of every soul.

Three dim days through, three slumberless nights  
long,  
Perplexed at dawn, oppressed at evensong,  
The strong man's soul now sealed indeed with pain  
And all its springs half dried with drought, had lain

Prisoner within the fleshly dungeon-dress  
Sore chafed and wasted with its weariness.  
And fain it would have found the star, and fain  
Made this funereal prison-house of pain  
A watch-tower whence its eyes might sweep, and see  
If any place for any hope might be  
Beyond the hells and heavens of sleep and strife,  
Or any light at all of any life  
Beyond the dense false darkness woven above,  
And could not, lacking grace to look on love,  
And in the third night's dying hour he spake,  
Seeing scarce the seals that bound the dayspring  
break  
And scarce the daystar burn above the sea :  
" O Ganhardine, my brother true to me,  
I charge thee by those nights and days we knew  
No great while since in England, by the dew  
That bathed those nights with blessing, and the fire  
That thrilled those days as music thrills a lyre,  
Do now for me perchance the last good deed  
That ever love may crave or life may need  
Ere love lay life in ashes : take to thee  
My ship that shows aloft against the sea  
Carved on her stem the semblance of a swan,  
And ere the waves at even again wax wan  
Pass, if it may be, to my lady's land,  
And give this ring into her secret hand,  
And bid her think how hard on death I lie,  
And fain would look upon her face and die.  
But as a merchant's laden be the bark  
With royal ware for fraughtage, that King Mark  
May take for toll thereof some costly thing ;  
And when this gift finds grace before the king,  
Choose forth a cup, and put therein my ring

Where sureliest only of one it may be seen,  
 And bid her handmaid bear it to the queen  
 For earnest of thine homage : then shall she  
 Fear, and take counsel privily with thee,  
 To know what errand there is thine from me  
 And what my need in secret of her sight.  
 But make thee two sails, one like sea-foam white  
 To spread for signal if thou bring her back,  
 And if she come not see the sail be black,  
 That I may know or ever thou take land  
 If these my lips may die upon her hand  
 Or hers may never more be mixed with mine."

And his heart quailed for grief in Ganhardine,  
 Hearing ; and all his brother bade he swore  
 Surely to do, and straight fare forth from shore.  
 But the white-handed Iseult hearkening heard  
 All, and her heart waxed hot, and every word  
 Thereon seemed graven and printed in her thought  
 As lines with fire and molten iron wrought.  
 And hard within her heavy heart she cursed  
 Both, and her life was turned to fiery thirst,  
 And all her soul was hunger, and its breath  
 Of hope and life a blast of raging death.  
 For only in hope of evil was her life.  
 So bitter burned within the unchilled wife  
 A virgin lust for vengeance, and such hate  
 Wrought in her now the fervent work of fate.

Then with a south-west wind the Swan set forth,  
 And over wintering waters bore to north,  
 And round the wild land's windy westward end  
 Up the blown channel bade her bright way bend.  
 East on toward high Tintagel ; where at dark  
 Landing, fair welcome found they of King Mark,

And Ganhardine with Brangwain as of old  
Spake, and she took the cup of chiselled gold  
Wherein lay secret Tristram's trothplight ring,  
And bare it unbeholden of the king  
Even to her lady's hand, which hardly took  
A gift whereon a queen's eyes well might look,  
With grace forlorn of weary gentleness.  
But, seeing, her life leapt in her, keen to guess  
The secret of the symbol : and her face  
Flashed bright with blood whence all its grief-worn  
    grace  
Took fire and kindled to the quivering hair.  
And in the dark soft hour of starriest air  
Thrilled through with sense of midnight, when the  
    world  
Feels the wide wings of sleep about it furled,  
Down stole the queen, deep-muffled to her war  
Mute restless lips, and came where yet the Swan  
Swung fast at anchor : whence by starlight she  
Hoised snowbright sails, and took the glimmering  
    sea.  
    But all the long night long more keen and sore  
His wound's grief waxed in Tristram evermore,  
And heavier always hung his heart asway  
Between dim fear and clouded hope of day.  
And still with face and heart at silent strife  
Beside him watched the maiden called his wife,  
Patient, and spake not save when scarce he spake,  
Murmuring with sense distraught and spirit awake  
Speech bitterer than the words thereof were sweet :  
And hatred thrilled her to the hands and feet,  
Listening : for alway back reiterate came  
The passionate faint burden of her name.

Nor ever through the labouring lips astir  
Came any word of any thought of her.  
But the soul wandering struggled and clung hard  
Only to dreams of joy in Joyous Gard  
Or wildwood nights beside the Cornish strand,  
Or Merlin's holier sleep here hard at hand  
Wrapped round with deep soft spells in dim Broce-  
liande.

And with such thirst as joy's drained wine-cup leaves  
When fear to hope as hope to memory cleaves  
His soul desired the dewy sense of leaves,  
The soft green smell of thickets drenched with dawn.  
The faint slot kindling on the fiery lawn  
As day's first hour made keen the spirit again  
That lured and spurred on quest his hound Hodain,  
The breeze, the bloom, the splendour and the sound,  
That stung like fire the hunter and the hound.  
The pulse of wind, the passion of the sea,  
The rapture of the woodland : then would he  
Sigh, and as one that fain would all be dead  
Heavily turn his heavy-laden head  
Back, and close eyes for comfort, finding none.  
And fain he would have died or seen the sun,  
Being sick at heart of darkness : yet afresh  
Began the long strong strife of spirit and flesh  
And branching pangs of thought whose branches bear  
The bloodred fruit whose core is black, despair.  
And the wind slackened and again grew great,  
Palpitant as men's pulses palpitate  
Between the flowing and ebbing tides of fate  
That wash their lifelong waifs of weal and woe  
Through night and light and twilight to and fro.  
Now as a pulse of hope its heartbeat throbbed,  
Now like one stricken shrank and sank and sobbed,

Then, yearning as with child of death, put forth  
A wail that filled the night up south and north  
With woful sound of waters : and he said,  
" So might the wind wail if the world were dead  
And its wings wandered over nought but sea.  
I would I knew she would not come to me,  
For surely she will come not : then should I,  
Once knowing I shall not look upon her, die.  
I knew not life could so long breathe such breath  
As I do. Nay, what grief were this, if death,  
The sole sure friend of whom the whole world saith  
He lies not, nor hath ever this been said,  
That death would heal not grief—if death were dead  
And all ways closed whence grief might pass with  
life ! "

Then softly spake his watching virgin wife  
Out of her heart, deep down below her breath :  
" Fear not but death shall come—and after death  
Judgment." And he that heard not answered her,  
Saying—" Ah, but one there was, if truth not err,  
For true men's trustful tongues have said it—one  
Whom these mine eyes knew living while the sun  
Looked yet upon him, and mine own ears heard  
The deep sweet sound once of his godlike word—  
Who sleeps and dies not, but with soft live breath  
Takes always all the deep delight of death,  
Through love's gift of a woman : but for me  
Love's hand is not the hand of Nimue,  
Love's word no still smooth murmur of the dove,  
No kiss of peace for me the kiss of love.  
Nor, whatsoe'er thy life's love ever give,  
Dear, shall it ever bid me sleep or live ;  
Nor from thy brows and lips and living breast  
As his from Nimue's shall my soul take rest ;

Not rest but unrest hath our long love given—  
Unrest on earth that wins not rest in heaven.  
What rest may we take ever? what have we  
Had ever more of peace than has the sea?  
Has not our life been as a wind that blows  
Through lonelier lands than rear the wild white rose  
That each year sees requickened, but for us  
Time once and twice hath here or there done thus  
And left the next year following empty and bare?  
What rose hath our last year's rose left for heir,  
What wine our last year's vintage? and to me  
More were one fleet forbidden sense of thee,  
One perfume of thy present grace, one thought  
Made truth one hour, ere all mine hours be nought,  
One very word, breath, look, sign, touch of hand,  
Than all the green leaves in Broceliande  
Full of sweet sound, full of sweet wind and sun;  
O God, thou knowest I would no more but one,  
I would no more but once more ere I die  
Find thus much mercy. Nay, but then were I  
Happier than he whom there thy grace hath found,  
For thine it must be, this that wraps him round,  
Thine only, albeit a fiend's force gave him birth,  
Thine that has given him heritage on earth  
Of slumber-sweet eternity to keep  
Fast in soft hold of everliving sleep.  
Happier were I, more sinful man, than he,  
Whom one love-worthier then than Nimue  
Should with a breath make blest among the dead."  
And the wan wedded maiden answering said,  
Soft as hate speaks within itself apart:  
"Surely ye shall not, ye that rent mine heart,  
Being one in 'sin, in punishment be twain."  
And the great knight that heard not spake again

And sighed, but sweet thought of sweet things gone by

Kindled with fire of joy the very sigh

And touched it through with rapture : " Ay, this were

How much more than the sun and sunbright air,  
How much more than the springtide, how much more  
Than sweet strong sea-wind quickening wave and shore

With one divine pulse of continuous breath,  
If she might kiss me with the kiss of death,  
And make the light of life by death's look dim ! "

And the white wedded virgin answered him,  
Inwardly, wan with hurt no herb makes whole :  
" Yea surely, ye whose sin hath slain my soul,  
Surely your own souls shall have peace in death  
And pass with benediction in their breath  
And blessing given of mine their sin hath slain."

And Tristram with sore yearning spake again,  
Saying : " Yea, might this thing once be, how should I,

With all my soul made one thanksgiving, die,  
And pass before what judgment-seat may be,  
And cry, ' Lord, now do all thou wilt with me,  
Take all thy fill of justice, work thy will ;  
Though all thy heart of wrath have all its fill,  
My heart of suffering shall endure, and say,  
*For that thou gavest me living yesterday*  
*I bless thee though thou curse me.*' Ay, and well  
Might one cast down into the gulf of hell,  
Remembering this, take heart and thank his fate—  
That God, whose doom now scourges him with hate  
Once, in the wild and whirling world above,  
Bade mercy kiss his dying lips with love.

But if this come not, then he doth me wrong.  
For what hath love done, all this long life long  
That death should trample down his poor last prayer  
Who prays not for forgiveness? Though love were  
Sin dark as hate, have we not here that sinned  
Suffered? has that been less than wintry wind  
Wherewith our love lies blasted? O mine own,  
O mine and no man's yet save mine alone,  
Iseult! what ails thee that I lack so long  
All of thee, all things thine for which I long?  
For more than watersprings to shadeless sands,  
More to me were the comfort of her hands  
Touched once, and more than rays that set and rise  
The glittering arrows of her glorious eyes,  
More to my sense than fire to dead cold air  
The wind and light and odour of her hair,  
More to my soul than summer's to the south  
The mute clear music of her amorous mouth,  
And to my heart's heart more than heaven's great rest  
The fullness of the fragrance of her breast.  
Iseult, Iseult, what grace hath life to give  
More than we twain have had of life, and live?  
Iseult, Iseult, what grace may death not keep  
As sweet for us to win of death, and sleep?  
Come therefore, let us twain pass hence and try  
If it be better not to live but die,  
With love for lamp to light us out of life."

And on that word his wedded maiden wife,  
Pale as the moon in star-forsaken skies  
Ere the sun fill them, rose with set strange eyes  
And gazed on him that saw not: and her heart  
Heaved as a man's death-smitten with a dart  
That smites him sleeping, warm and full of life:  
So toward her lord that was not looked his wife,

His wife that was not : and her heart within  
Burnt bitter like an aftertaste of sin  
To one whose memory drinks and loathes the lee  
Of shame or sorrow deeper than the sea :  
And no fear touched him of her eyes above  
And ears that hoarded each poor word whence love  
Made sweet the broken music of his breath.  
“ Iseult, my life that wast and art my death,  
My life in life that hast been, and that art  
Death in my death, sole wound that cleaves mine  
heart,  
Mine heart that else, how spent soe'er, were whole,  
Breath of my spirit and anguish of my soul,  
How can this be that hence thou canst not hear,  
Being but by space divided ? One is here,  
But one of twain I looked at once to see ;  
Shall death keep time and thou not keep with me ? ”  
And the white married maiden laughed at heart,  
Hearing, and scarce with lips at all apart  
Spake, and as fire between them was her breath ;  
“ Yea, now thou liest not : yea, for I am death.”  
By this might eyes that watched without behold  
Deep in the gulfs of aching air acold  
The roses of the dawning heaven that strew  
The low soft sun’s way ere his power shine through  
And burn them up with fire : but far to west  
Had sunk the dead moon on the live sea’s breast,  
Slain as with bitter fear to see the sun :  
And eastward was a strong bright wind begun  
Between the clouds and waters : and he said,  
Seeing hardly through dark dawn her doubtful head ;  
“ Iseult ? ” and like a death-bell faint and clear  
The virgin voice rang answer—“ I am here.”

And his heart sprang, and sank again : and she  
Spake, saying, " What would my knightly lord with  
me ? "

And Tristram : " Hath my lady watched all night  
Beside me, and I knew not ? God requite  
Her love for comfort shown a man nigh dead."

" Yea, God shall surely guerdon it," she said,  
" Who hath kept me all my days through to this  
hour."

And Tristram : " God alone hath grace and power  
To pay such grace toward one unworthier shown  
Than ever durst, save only of God alone,  
Crave pardon yet and comfort, as I would  
Crave now for charity if my heart were good,  
But as a coward's it fails me, even for shame."

Then seemed her face a pale funereal flame  
That burns down slow by midnight, as she said :  
" Speak, and albeit thy bidding spake me dead,  
God's love renounce me if it were not done."

And Tristram : " When the sea-line takes the sun  
That now should be not far off sight from far,  
Look if there come not with the morning star  
My ship bound hither from the northward back,  
And if the sail be white thereof or black."

And knowing the soothfast sense of his desire  
So sore the heart within her raged like fire  
She could not wring forth of her lips a word,  
But bowing made sign how humbly had she heard.  
And the sign given made light his heart ; and she  
Set her face hard against the yearning sea  
Now all athirst with trembling trust of hope  
To see the sudden gates of sunrise ope ;  
But thirstier yearned the heart whose fiery gate  
Lay wide that vengeance might come in to hate.

And Tristram lay at thankful rest, and thought  
Now surely life nor death could grieve him aught,  
Since past was now life's anguish as a breath,  
And surely past the bitterness of death.

For seeing he had found at these her hands this grace,  
It could not be but yet some breathing-space  
Might leave him life to look again on love's own face.  
" Since if for death's sake," in his heart he said,  
" Even she take pity upon me quick or dead,  
How shall not even from God's hand be compassion  
shed ?

For night bears dawn, how weak soe'er and wan,  
And sweet ere death, men fable, sings the swan.  
So seems the Swan my signal from the sea  
To sound a song that sweetens death to me  
Clasped round about with radiance from above  
Of dawn, and closer clasped on earth by love.  
Shall all things brighten, and this my sign be dark ? "

And high from heaven suddenly rang the lark,  
Triumphant ; and the far first refulgent ray  
Filled all the hollow darkness full with day.  
And on the deep sky's verge a fluctuant light  
Gleamed, grew, shone, strengthened into perfect  
sight,  
As bowed and dipped and rose again the sail's clear  
white.

And swift and steadfast as a sea-mew's wing  
It neared before the wind, as fain to bring  
Comfort, and shorten yet its narrowing track.  
And she that saw looked hardly toward him back,  
Saying, " Ay, the ship comes surely ; but her sail is  
black."

And fain he would have sprung upright, and seen,  
And spoken : but strong death struck sheer between,

And darkness closed as iron round his head :  
And smitten through the heart lay Tristram dead.

And scarce the word had flown abroad, and wail  
Risen, ere to shoreward came the snowbright sail,  
And lightly forth leapt Ganhardine on land,  
And led from ship with swift and reverent hand  
Iseult : and round them up from all the crowd  
Broke the great wail for Tristram out aloud.  
And ere her ear might hear her heart had heard,  
Nor sought she sign for witness of the word ;  
But came and stood above him newly dead,  
And felt his death upon her : and her head  
Bowed, as to reach the spring that slakes all  
drouth ;  
And their four lips became one silent mouth.

So came their hour on them that were in life  
Tristram and Iseult : so from love and strife  
The stroke of love's own hand felt last and best  
Gave them deliverance to perpetual rest.  
So, crownless of the wreaths that life had wound,  
They slept, with flower of tenderer comfort crowned ;  
From bondage and the fear of time set free,  
And all the yoke of space on earth and sea  
Cast as a curb for ever : nor might now  
Fear and desire bid soar their souls or bow,  
Lift up their hearts or break them : doubt nor grief  
More now might move them, dread nor disbelief  
Touch them with shadowy cold or fiery sting,  
Nor sleepless languor with its weary wing,  
Nor harsh estrangement, born of time's vain breath,  
Nor change, a darkness deeper far than death.

And round the sleep that fell around them then  
Earth lies not wrapped, nor records wrought of men  
Rise up for timeless token : but their sleep  
Hath round it like a raiment all the deep ;  
No change or gleam or gloom of sun and rain,  
But all time long the might of all the main  
Spread round them as round earth soft heaven is  
spread,  
And peace more strong than death round all the dead.  
For death is of an hour, and after death  
Peace : nor for aught that fear or fancy saith,  
Nor even for very love's own sake, shall strife  
Perplex again that perfect peace with life.  
And if, as men that mourn may deem or dream,  
Rest haply here than there might sweeter seem,  
And sleep, that lays one hand on all, more good  
By some sweet grave's grace given of wold or wood  
Or clear high glen or sunbright wind-worn down  
Than where life thunders through the trampling town  
With daylong feet and nightlong overhead,  
What grave may cast such grace round any dead,  
What so sublime sweet sepulchre may be  
For all that life leaves mortal, as the sea ?  
And these, rapt forth perforce from earthly ground,  
These twain the deep sea guards, and girdles round  
Their sleep more deep than any sea's gulf lies,  
Though changeless with the change in shifting skies,  
Nor mutable with seasons : for the grave  
That held them once, being weaker than a wave,  
The waves long since have buried : though their tomb  
Was royal that by ruth's relenting doom  
Men gave them in Tintagel : for the word  
Took wing which thrilled all piteous hearts that  
heard

The word wherethrough their lifelong lot stood  
shown,  
And when the long sealed springs of fate were  
known,  
The blind bright innocence of lips that quaffed  
Love, and the marvel of the mastering draught,  
And all the fraughtage of the fateful bark,  
Loud like a child upon them wept King Mark,  
Seeing round the sword's hilt which long since had  
fought  
For Cornwall's love a scroll of writing wrought,  
A scripture writ of Tristram's hand, wherein  
Lay bare the sinless source of all their sin,  
No choice of will, but chance and sorcerous art,  
With prayer of him for pardon : and his heart  
Was molten in him, wailing as he kissed  
Each with the kiss of kinship—" Had I wist,  
Ye had never sinned nor died thus, nor had I  
Borne in this doom that bade you sin and die  
So sore a part of sorrow." And the king  
Built for their tomb a chapel bright like spring  
With flower-soft wealth of branching tracery made  
Fair as the frondage each fleet year sees fade,  
That should not fall till many a year were done.  
There slept they wedded under moon and sun  
And change of stars : and through the casements  
came  
Midnight and noon girt round with shadow and  
flame  
To illume their grave or veil it : till at last  
On these things too was doom as darkness cast :  
For the strong sea hath swallowed wall and tower,  
And where their limbs were laid in woful hour

For many a fathom gleams and moves and moans  
The tide that sweeps above their coffined bones  
In the wrecked chancel by the shivered shrine :  
Nor where they sleep shall moon or sunlight shine  
Nor man look down for ever : none shall say,  
Here once, or here, Tristram and Iseult lay :  
But peace they have that none may gain who live,  
And rest about them that no love can give,  
And over them, while death and life shall be,  
The light and sound and darkness of the sea.



# THE TALE OF BALEN



## DEDICATION

TO MY MOTHER

LOVE that holds life and death in fee,  
Deep as the clear unsounded sea  
And sweet as life or death can be,  
Lays here my hope, my heart, and me  
Before you, silent, in a song.

Since the old wild tale, made new, found grace,  
When half sung through, before your face,  
It needs must live a springtide space,  
While April suns grow strong.

*March 24, 1896.*



## I

IN hawthorn-time the heart grows light,  
 The world is sweet in sound and sight,  
 Glad thoughts and birds take flower and flight,  
 The heather kindles toward the light,

    The whin is frankincense and flame.  
 And be it for strife or be it for love  
 The falcon quickens as the dove  
 When earth is touched from heaven above  
     With joy that knows no name.

And glad in spirit and sad in soul  
 With dream and doubt of days that roll  
 As waves that race and find no goal  
 Rode on by bush and brake and bole

    A northern child of earth and sea.  
 The pride of life before him lay  
 Radiant : the heavens of night and day  
 Shone less than shone before his way  
     His ways and days to be.

And all his life of blood and breath  
 Sang out within him : time and death  
 Were even as words a dreamer saith  
 When sleep within him slackeneth,  
     And light and life and spring were one.

The steed between his knees that sprang,  
The moors and woods that shone and sang,  
The hours wherethrough the spring's breath rang,  
Seemed ageless as the sun.

But alway through the bounteous bloom  
That earth gives thanks if heaven illume  
His soul forefelt a shadow of doom,  
His heart foreknew a gloomier gloom

Than closes all men's equal ways.

Albeit the spirit of life's light spring  
With pride of heart upheld him, king  
And lord of hours like snakes that sting  
And nights that darken days.

And as the strong spring round him grew  
Stronger, and all blithe winds that blew  
Blither, and flowers that flowered anew  
More glad of sun and air and dew,

The shadow lightened on his soul  
And brightened into death and died  
Like winter, as the bloom waxed wide  
From woodside on to riverside  
And southward goal to goal.

Along the wandering ways of Tyne,  
By beech and birch and thorn that shine  
And laugh when life's requickening wine  
Makes night and noon and dawn divine

And stirs in all the veins of spring,  
And past the brightening banks of Tees,  
He rode as one that breathes and sees  
A sun more blithe, a merrier breeze,  
A life that hails him king.

And down the softening south that knows  
No more how glad the heather glows,  
Nor how, when winter's clarion blows  
Across the bright Northumbrian snows,  
Sea-mists from east and westward meet,  
Past Avon senseless yet of song  
And Thames that bore but swans in throng  
He rode elate in heart and strong  
In trust of days as sweet.

So came he through to Camelot,  
Glad, though for shame his heart waxed hot,  
For hope within it withered not  
To see the shaft it dreamed of shot  
Fair toward the glimmering goal of fame.  
And all King Arthur's knightliest there  
Approved him knightly, swift to dare  
And keen to bid their records bear  
Sir Balen's northern name.

Sir Balen of Northumberland  
Gat grace before the king to stand  
High as his heart was, and his hand  
Wrought honour toward the strange north strand  
That sent him south so goodly a knight.  
And envy, sick with sense of sin,  
Began as poisonous herbs begin  
To work in base men's blood, akin  
To men's of nobler might.

And even so fell it that his doom,  
For all his bright life's kindling bloom  
And light that took no thought for gloom,  
Fell as a breath from the opening tomb  
Full on him ere he wist or thought.

For once a churl of royal seed,  
King Arthur's kinsman, faint in deed  
And loud in word that knew not heed,  
    Spake shame where shame was nought.

“ What doth one here in Camelot  
Whose birth was northward ? Wot we not  
As all his brethren borderers wot  
How blind of heart, how keen and hot,  
    The wild north lives and hates the south ?  
Men of the narrowing march that knows  
Nought save the strength of storms and snows,  
What would these carles where knighthood blows  
    A trump of kinglike mouth ? ”

Swift from his place leapt Balen, smote  
The liar across his face, and wrote  
His wrath in blood upon the bloat  
Brute cheek that challenged shame for note  
    How vile a king-born knave might be.  
Forth sprang their swords, and Balen slew  
The knave ere well one witness knew  
Of all that round them stood or drew  
    What sight was there to see.

Then spake the great king's wrathful will  
A doom for six dark months to fill  
Wherein close prison held him, still  
And steadfast-souled for good or ill.

But when those weary days lay dead  
His lordliest knights and barons spake  
Before the king for Balen's sake  
Good speech and wise, of force to break  
    The bonds that bowed his head.

## II

IN linden-time the heart is high  
 For pride of summer passing by  
 With lordly laughter in her eye ;  
 A heavy splendour in the sky

Uplifts and bows it down again.

The spring had waned from wood and wold  
 Since Balen left his prison hold  
 And lowlier-hearted than of old  
 Beheld it wax and wane.

Though humble heart and poor array  
 Kept not from spirit and sense away  
 Their noble nature, nor could slay  
 The pride they bade but pause and stay  
 Till time should bring its trust to flower,  
 Yet even for noble shame's sake, born  
 Of hope that smiled on hate and scorn,  
 He held him still as earth ere morn  
 Ring forth her rapturous hour.

But even as earth when dawn takes flight  
 And beats her wings of dewy light  
 Full in the faltering face of night,  
 His soul awoke to claim by right  
 The life and death of deed and doom,

When once before the king there came  
 A maiden clad with grief and shame  
 And anguish burning her like flame  
 That feeds on flowers in bloom.

Beneath a royal mantle, fair  
 With goodly work of lustrous vair,  
 Girt fast against her side she bare  
 A sword whose weight bade all men there  
 Quail to behold her face again.  
 Save of a passing perfect knight  
 Not great alone in force and fight  
 It might not be for any might  
 Drawn forth, and end her pain.

So said she : then King Arthur spake :  
 " Albeit indeed I dare not take  
 Such praise on me, for knighthood's sake  
 And love of ladies will I make  
 Assay if better none may be."  
 By girdle and by sheath he caught  
 The sheathed and girded sword, and wrought  
 With strength whose force availed him nought  
 To save and set her free.

Again she spake : " No need to set  
 The might that man has matched not yet  
 Against it ; he whose hand shall get  
 Grace to release the bonds that fret  
 My bosom and my girdlestead  
 With little strain of strength or strife  
 Shall bring me as from death to life  
 And win to sister or to wife  
 Fame that outlives men dead."

Then bade the king his knights assay  
 This mystery that before him lay  
 And mocked his might of manhood. "Nay,"  
 Quoth she, "the man that takes away  
     This burden laid on me must be  
 A knight of record clean and fair  
 As sunlight and the flowerful air,  
 By sire and mother born to bear  
     A name to shame not me."

Then forth strode Launcelot, and laid  
 The mighty-moulded hand that made  
 Strong knights reel back like birds affrayed  
 By storm that smote them as they strayed  
     Against the hilt that yielded not.  
 Then Tristram, bright and sad and kind  
 As one that bore in noble mind  
 Love that made light as darkness blind,  
     Fared even as Launcelot.

Then Lamoracke, with hardier cheer,  
 As one that held all hope and fear  
 Wherethrough the spirit of man may steer  
 In life and death less dark or dear,  
     Laid hand thereon, and fared as they.  
 With half a smile his hand he drew  
 Back from the spell-bound thing, and threw  
 With half a glance his heart anew  
     Toward no such blameless may.

Between Iseult and Guenevere  
 Sat one of name as high to hear,  
 But darklier doomed than they whose cheer  
 Foreshowed not yet the deadlier year  
     That bids the queenliest head bow down,

The queen Morgause of Orkney : they  
 With scarce a flash of the eye could say  
 The very word of dawn, when day  
 Gives earth and heaven their crown.

But bright and dark as night or noon  
 And lowering as a storm-flushed moon  
 When clouds and thwarting winds distune  
 The music of the midnight, soon

To die from darkening star to star  
 And leave a silence in the skies  
 That yearns till dawn find voice and rise,  
 Shone strange as fate Morgause, with eyes  
 That dwelt on days afar.

A glance that shot on Lamoracke  
 As from a storm-cloud bright and black  
 Fire swift and blind as death's own track  
 Turned fleet as flame on Arthur back

From him whose hand forsook the hilt :  
 And one in blood and one in sin  
 Their hearts caught fire of pain within  
 And knew no goal for them to win  
 But death that guerdons guilt.

Then Gawain, sweet of soul and gay  
 As April ere he dreams of May,  
 Strove, and prevailed not ; then Sir Kay,  
 The snake-souled envier, vile as they

That fawn and foam and lurk and lie,  
 Sire of the bastard band whose brood  
 Was alway found at servile feud  
 With honour, faint and false and lewd,  
 Scarce grasped and put it by.

Then wept for woe the damsel bound  
 With iron and with anguish round,  
 That none to help her grief was found  
 Or loose the inextricably inwound

Grim curse that girt her life with grief  
 And made a burden of her breath,  
 Harsh as the bitterness of death.  
 Then spake the king as one that saith  
 Words bitterer even than brief.

“ Methought the wide round world could bring  
 Before the face of queen or king  
 No knights more fit for fame to sing  
 Than fill this full Round Table’s ring  
 With honour higher than pride of place :  
 But now my heart is wrung to know,  
 Damsel, that none whom fame can show  
 Finds grace to heal or help thy woe :  
 God gives them not the grace.”

Then from the lowliest place thereby,  
 With heart-ekindled cheek and eye  
 Most like the star and kindling sky  
 That say the sundawn’s hour is high

When rapture trembles through the sea,  
 Strode Balen in his poor array  
 Forth, and took heart of grace to pray  
 The damsel suffer even him to assay  
 His power to set her free.

Nay, how should he avail, she said,  
 Averse with scorn-averted head,  
 Where these availed not ? none had sped  
 Of all these mightier men that led  
 The lists wherein he might not ride,

And how should less men speed ? But he,  
 With lordlier pride of courtesy,  
 Put forth his hand and set her free  
 From pain and humbled pride.

But on the sword he gazed elate  
 With hope set higher than fear or fate,  
 Or doubt of darkling days in wait ;  
 And when her thankful praise waxed great  
 And craved of him the sword again,  
 He would not give it. " Nay, for mine  
 It is till force may make it thine."  
 A smile that shone as death may shine  
 Spake toward him bale and bane.

Strange lightning flickered from her eyes.  
 " Gentle and good in knightliest guise  
 And meet for quest of strange emprise  
 Thou hast here approved thee : yet not wise  
 To keep the sword from me, I wis.  
 For with it thou shalt surely slay  
 Of all that look upon the day  
 The man best loved of thee, and lay  
 Thine own life down for his."

" What chance God sends, that chance I take,"  
 He said. Then soft and still she spake ;  
 " I would but for thine only sake  
 Have back the sword of thee, and break  
 The links of doom that bind thee round.  
 But seeing thou wilt not have it so,  
 My heart for thine is wrung with woe."  
 " God's will," quoth he, " it is, we know,  
 Wherewith our lives are bound."

“ Repent it must thou soon,” she said,  
“ Who wouldest not hear the rede I read  
For thine and not for my sake, sped  
In vain as waters heavenward shed

From springs that falter and depart  
Earthward. God bids not thee believe  
Truth, and the web thy life must weave  
For even this sword to close and cleave  
Hangs heavy round my heart.”

So passed she mourning forth. But he,  
With heart of springing hope set free  
As birds that breast and brave the sea,  
Bade horse and arms and armour be

Made straightway ready toward the fray.  
Nor even might Arthur’s royal prayer  
Withhold him, but with frank and fair  
Thanksgiving and leave-taking there  
He turned him thence away.

## III

As the east wind, when the morning's breast  
 Gleams like a bird's that leaves the nest,  
 A fledgeling halcyon's bound on quest,  
 Drives wave on wave on wave to west  
     Till all the sea be life and light,  
 So time's mute breath, that brings to bloom  
 All flowers that strew the dead spring's tomb,  
 Drives day on day on day to doom  
     Till all man's day be night.

Brief as the breaking of a wave  
 That hurls on man his thunderous grave  
 Ere fear find breath to cry or crave  
 Life that no chance may spare or save,  
     The light of joy and glory shone  
 Even as in dreams where death seems dead  
 Round Balen's hope-exalted head,  
 Shone, passed, and lightened as it fled  
     The shadow of doom thereon.

For as he bound him thence to fare,  
 Before the stately presence there  
 A lady like a windflower fair,  
 Girt on with raiment strange and rare  
     That rippled whispering round her, came.

Her clear cold eyes, all glassy grey,  
 Seemed lit not with the light of day  
 But touched with gleams that waned away  
 Of quelled and fading flame.

Before the king she bowed and spake :  
 " King, for thine old faith's plighted sake  
 To me the lady of the lake,  
 I come in trust of thee to take  
 The guerdon of the gift I gave,  
 Thy sword Excalibur." And he  
 Made answer : " Be it whate'er it be,  
 If mine to give, I give it thee,  
 Nor need is thine to crave."

As when a gleam of wicked light  
 Turns half a low-lying water bright  
 That moans beneath the shivering night  
 With sense of evil sound and sight

And whispering witchcraft's bated breath  
 Her wan face quickened as she said :  
 " This knight that won the sword—his head  
 I crave or hers that brought it. Dead,  
 Let these be one in death."

" Not with mine honour this may be ;  
 Ask all save this thou wilt," quoth he,  
 " And have thy full desire." But she  
 Made answer : " Nought will I of thee,  
 Nought if not this." Then Balen turned,  
 And saw the sorceress hard beside  
 By whose fell craft his mother died :  
 Three years he had sought her; and here espied  
 His heart against her yearned.

“ Ill be thou met,” he said, “ whose ire  
 Would slake with blood thy soul’s desire :  
 By thee my mother died in fire ;  
 Die thou by me a death less dire.”

Sharp flashed his sword forth, fleet as flame,  
 And shore away her sorcerous head.

“ Alas for shame,” the high king said,  
 “ That one found once my friend lies dead ;  
 Alas for all our shame !

“ Thou shouldst have here forborne her ; yea,  
 Were all the wrongs that bid men slay  
 Thine, heaped too high for wrath to weigh,  
 Not here before my face to-day

Was thine the right to wreak thy wrong.”  
 Still stood he then as one that found  
 His rose of hope by storm discrowned,  
 And all the joy that girt him round  
 Brief as a broken song.

Yet ere he passed he turned and spake :  
 “ King, only for thy nobler sake  
 Than aught of power man’s power may take  
 Or pride of place that pride may break

I bid the lordlier man in thee,  
 That lives within the king, give ear.  
 This justice done before thee here  
 On one that hell’s own heart holds dear,  
 Needs might not this but be.

“ Albeit, for all that pride would prove,  
 My heart be wrung to lose thy love,  
 It yet repents me not hereof :  
 So many an eagle and many a dove,  
 So many a knight, so many a may,

This water-snake of poisonous tongue  
To death by words and wiles hath stung,  
That her their slayer, from hell's lake sprung,  
I did not ill to slay."

"Yea," said the king, "too high of heart  
To stand before a king thou art ;  
Yet irks it me to bid thee part  
And take thy penance for thy part,  
That God may put upon thy pride."

Then Balen took the severed head  
And toward his hostry turned and sped  
As one that knew not quick from dead  
Nor good from evil tide.

He bade his squire before him stand  
And take that sanguine spoil in hand  
And bear it far by shore and strand  
Till all in glad Northumberland  
That loved him, seeing it, all might know  
His deadliest foe was dead, and hear  
How free from prison as from fear  
He dwelt in trust of the answering year  
To bring him weal for woe.

"And tell them, now I take my way  
To meet in battle, if I may,  
King Ryons of North Wales, and slay  
That king of kerns whose fiery sway  
Doth all the marches dire despite  
That serve King Arthur : so shall he  
Again be gracious lord to me,  
And I that leave thee meet with thee  
Once more in Arthur's sight."

So spake he ere they parted, nor  
 Took shame or fear to counsellor,  
 As one whom none laid ambush for ;  
 And wist not how Sir Launceor,

The wild king's son of Ireland, hot  
 And high in wrath to know that one  
 Stood higher in fame before the sun,  
 Even Balen, since the sword was won,  
 Drew nigh from Camelot.

For thence, in heat of hate and pride,  
 As one that man might bid not bide,  
 He craved the high king's grace to ride,  
 On quest of Balen far and wide

And wreak the wrong his wrath had wrought  
 "Yea," Arthur said, "for such despite  
 Was done me never in my sight  
 As this thine hand shall now requite  
 If trust avail us aught."

But ere he passed, in eager mood  
 To feed his hate with bitter food,  
 Before the king's face Merlin stood  
 And heard his tale of ill and good,  
 Of Balen, and the sword achieved,  
 And whence it smote as heaven's red ire  
 That direful dame of doom as dire ;  
 And how the king's wrath turned to fire  
 The grief wherewith he grieved.

And darkening as he gave it ear,  
 The still face of the sacred seer  
 Waxed wan with wrath and not with fear,  
 And ever changed its cloudier cheer  
 Till all his face was very night.

“ This damosel that brought the sword,”  
He said, “ before the king my lord,  
And all these knights about his board,  
Hath done them all despite.

“ The falsest damosel she is  
That works men ill on earth, I wis,  
And all her mind is toward but this,  
To kill as with a lying kiss  
Truth, and the life of noble trust.  
A brother hath she,—see but now  
The flame of shame that brands her brow!—  
A true man, pure as faith’s own vow,  
Whose honour knows not rust.

“ This good knight found within her bower  
A felon and her paramour,  
And slew him in his shameful hour,  
As right gave might and righteous power  
To hands that wreaked so foul a wrong.  
Then, for the hate her heart put on,  
She sought by ways where death had gone  
The lady Lyle of Avalon,  
Whose crafts are strange and strong.

“ The sorceress, one with her in thought,  
Gave her that sword of magic, wrought  
By charms whereof sweet heaven sees nought,  
That hither girt on her she brought  
To be by doom her brother’s bane.  
And grief it is to think how he  
That won it, being of heart so free  
And perfect found in chivalry,  
Shall by that sword lie slain.

“Great pity it is and strange despite  
That one whose eyes are stars to light  
Honour, and shine as heaven’s own height,  
Should perish, being the goodliest knight  
That even the all-glorious north has borne.  
Nor shall my lord the king behold  
A lordlier friend of mightier mould  
Than Balen, though his tale be told  
Ere noon fulfil his morn.”

## IV

As morning hears before it run  
 The music of the mounting sun,  
 And laughs to watch his trophies won  
 From darkness, and her hosts undone,

And all the night become a breath,  
 Nor dreams that fear should hear and flee  
 The summer menace of the sea,  
 So hears our hope what life may be,  
 And knows it not for death.

Each day that slays its hours and dies  
 Weeps, laughs, and lightens on our eyes,  
 And sees and hears not : smiles and sighs  
 As flowers ephemeral fall and rise  
 About its birth, about its way,  
 And pass as love and sorrow pass,  
 As shadows flashing down a glass,  
 As dew-flowers blowing in flowerless grass,  
 As hope from yesterday.

The blossom of the sunny dew  
 That now the stronger sun strikes through  
 Fades off the blade whereon it blew  
 No fleetlier than the flowers that grew  
 On hope's green stem in life's fierce light.

Nor might the glory soon to sit  
 Awhile on Balen's crest alit  
 Outshine the shadow of doom on it  
 Or stay death's wings from flight.

Dawn on a golden moorland side  
 By holt and heath saw Balen ride  
 And Launceor after, pricked with pride  
 And stung with spurring envy : wide  
 And far he had ridden athwart strange lands  
 And sought amiss the man he found  
 And cried on, till the stormy sound  
 Rang as a rallying trumpet round  
 That fires men's hearts and hands.

Abide he bade him : nor was need  
 To bid when Balen wheeled his steed  
 Fiercely, less fain by word than deed  
 To bid his envier evil speed,

And cried, "What wilt thou with me?" Loud  
 Rang Launceor's vehement answer : "Knight,  
 To avenge on thee the dire despite  
 Thou hast done us all in Arthur's sight  
 I stand toward Arthur vowed."

"Ay?" Balen said : "albeit I see  
 I needs must deal in strife with thee,  
 Light is the wyte thou layest on me ;  
 For her I slew and sinned not, she  
 Was dire in all men's eyes as death,  
 Or none were lother found than I  
 By me to bid a woman die :  
 As lief were loyal men to lie,  
 Or scorn what honour saith."

As the arched wave's weight against the reef  
Hurls, and is hurled back like a leaf  
Storm-shrivelled, and its rage of grief  
Speaks all the loud broad sea in brief,

    And quells the hearkening hearts of men,  
Or as the crash of overfalls  
Down under blue smooth water brawls  
Like jarring steel on ruining walls,  
    So rang their meeting then.

As wave on wave shocks, and confounds  
The bounding bulk whereon it bounds  
And breaks and shattering seaward sounds  
As crying of the old sea's wolves and hounds  
    That moan and ravin and rage and wail,  
So steed on steed encountering sheer  
Shocked, and the strength of Launceor's spear  
Shivered on Balen's shield, and fear  
    Bade hope within him quail.

But Balen's spear through Launceor's shield  
Clove as a ploughshare cleaves the field  
And pierced the hauberk triple-stealed,  
That horse with horseman stricken reeled,  
    And as a storm-breached rock falls, fell,  
And Balen turned his horse again  
And wist not yet his foe lay slain,  
And saw him dead that sought his bane  
    And wrought and fared not well.

Suddenly, while he gazed and stood,  
And mused in many-minded mood  
If life or death were evil or good,  
Forth of a covert of a wood  
    That skirted half the moorland lea

Fast rode a maiden flower-like white  
Full toward that fair wild place of fight,  
Anhungered of the woful sight  
God gave her there to see.

And seeing the man there fallen and dead,  
She cried against the sun that shed  
Light on the living world, and said,  
“ O Balen, slayer whose hand is red,  
Two bodies and one heart thou hast slain,  
Two hearts within one body : aye,  
Two souls thou hast lost ; by thee they die,  
Cast out of sight of earth and sky  
And all that made them fain.”

And from the dead his sword she caught,  
And fell in trance that wist of nought,  
Swooning : but softly Balen sought  
To win from her the sword she thought  
To die on, dying by Launceor's side.  
Again her wakening wail outbroke  
As wildly, sword in hand, she woke  
And struck one swift and bitter stroke  
That healed her, and she died.

And sorrowing for their strange love's sake  
Rode Balen forth by lawn and lake,  
By moor and moss and briar and brake,  
And in his heart their sorrow spake  
Whose lips were dumb as death, and said  
Mute words of presage blind and vain  
As rain-stars blurred and marred by rain  
To wanderers on a moonless main  
Where night and day seem dead.

Then toward a sunbright wildwood side  
He looked and saw beneath it ride  
A knight whose arms afar espied  
By note of name and proof of pride  
    Bare witness of his brother born,  
His brother Balan, hard at hand,  
Twin flower of bright Northumberland,  
Twin sea-bird of their loud sea-strand,  
    Twin song-bird of their morn.

Ah then from Balen passed away  
All dread of night, all doubt of day,  
All care what life or death might say,  
All thought of all worse months than May :  
    Only the might of joy in love  
Brake forth within him as a fire,  
And deep delight in deep desire  
Of far-flown days whose full-souled quire  
    Rang round from the air above.

From choral earth and quiring air  
Rang memories winged like songs that bear  
Sweet gifts for spirit and sense to share :  
For no man's life knows love more fair  
    And fruitful of memorial things  
Than this the deep dear love that breaks  
With sense of life on life, and makes  
The sundawn sunnier as it wakes  
    Where morning round it rings.

“ O brother, O my brother ! ” cried  
Each upon each, and cast aside  
Their helms unbraced that might not hide  
From sight of memory single-eyed  
    The likeness graven of face and face,

And kissed and wept upon each other  
 For joy and pity of either brother,  
 And love engraffed by sire and mother,  
 God's natural gift of grace.

And each with each took counsel meet  
 For comfort, making sorrow sweet,  
 And grief a goodly thing to greet :  
 And word from word leapt light and fleet  
     Till all the venturous tale was told,  
 And how in Balen's hope it lay  
 To meet the wild Welsh king and slay,  
 And win from Arthur back for pay  
     The grace he gave of old.

“ And thither wilt not thou with me  
 And win as great a grace for thee ? ”  
 “ That will I well,” quoth Balan : “ we  
 Will cleave together, bound and free,  
     As brethren should, being twain and one.”  
 But ere they parted thence there came  
 A creature withered as with flame,  
 A dwarf mismade in nature's shame,  
     Between them and the sun.

And riding fleet as fire may glide  
 He found the dead lie side by side,  
 And wailed and rent his hair and cried,  
 “ Who hath done this deed ? ” And Balen eyed  
     The strange thing loathfully, and said,  
 “ The knight I slew, who found him fain  
 And keen to slay me : seeing him slain,  
 The maid I sought to save in vain,  
     Self-stricken, here lies dead.

“ Sore grief was mine to see her die,  
 And for her true faith’s sake shall I  
 Love, and with love of heart more high,  
 All women better till I die.”

“ Alas,” the dwarf said, “ ill for thee  
 In evil hour this deed was done :  
 For now the quest shall be begun  
 Against thee, from the dawning sun  
 Even to the sunset sea.

“ From shore to mountain, dawn to night,  
 The kinsfolk of this great dead knight  
 Will chase thee to thy death.” A light  
 Of swift blithe scorn flashed answer bright

As fire from Balen’s eye. “ For that,  
 Small fear shall fret my heart,” quoth he :  
 “ But that my lord the king should be  
 For this dead man’s sake wroth with me,  
 Weep might it well thereat.”

Then murmuring passed the dwarf away,  
 And toward the knights in fair array  
 Came riding eastward up the way  
 From where the flower-soft lowlands lay

A king whose name the sweet south-west  
 Held high in honour, and the land  
 That bowed beneath his gentle hand  
 Wore on its wild bright northern strand  
 Tintagel for a crest.

And Balen hailed with homage due  
 King Mark of Cornwall, when he knew  
 The pennon that before him flew :  
 And for those lovers dead and true  
 The king made moan to hear their doom ;

And for their sorrow's sake he sware  
To seek in all the marches there  
The church that man might find most fair  
And build therein their tomb.

As thought from thought takes wing and flies,  
 As month on month with sunlit eyes  
 Tramples and triumphs in its rise,  
 As wave smites wave to death and dies,  
 So chance on hurtling chance like steel  
 Strikes, flashes, and is quenched, ere fear  
 Can whisper hope, or hope can hear,  
 If sorrow or joy be far or near  
 For time to hurt or heal.

Swift as a shadow and strange as light  
 That cleaves in twain the shadow of night  
 Before the wide-winged word takes flight  
 That thunder speaks to depth and height  
 And quells the quiet hour with sound,  
 There came before King Mark and stood  
 Between the moorside and the wood  
 The man whose word God's will made good,  
 Nor guile was in it found.

And Merlin said to Balen : " Lo,  
 Thou hast wrought thyself a grievous woe  
 To let this lady die, and know  
 Thou mightst have stayed her deadly blow."  
 And Balen answered him and said,

“ Nay, by my truth to faith, not I,  
 So fiercely fain she was to die ;  
 Ere well her sword had flashed on high,  
 Self-slain she lay there dead.”

Again and sadly Merlin spake :  
 “ My heart is wrung for this deed’s sake,  
 To know thee therefore doomed to take  
 Upon thine hand a curse, and make  
 Three kingdoms pine through twelve years’  
 change,  
 In want and woe : for thou shalt smite  
 The man most noble and truest knight  
 That looks upon the live world’s light  
 A dolorous stroke and strange.

“ And not till years shall round their goal  
 May this man’s wound thou hast given be whole.”  
 And Balen, stricken through the soul  
 By dark-winged words of doom and dole,  
 Made answer : “ If I wist it were  
 No lie but sooth thou sayest of me,  
 Then even to make a liar of thee  
 Would I too slay myself, and see  
 How death bids dead men fare.”

And Merlin took his leave and passed  
 And was not : and the shadow as fast  
 Went with him that his word had cast,  
 Too fleet for thought thereof to last :  
 And there those brethren bade King Mark  
 Farewell : but fain would Mark have known  
 The strong knight’s name who had overthrown  
 The pride of Launceor, when it shone  
 Bright as it now lay dark.

And Balan for his brother spake,  
 Saying : " Sir, albeit him list not break  
 The seal of secret time, nor shake  
 Night off him ere his morning wake,

By these two swords he is girt withal  
 May men that praise him, knights and lords,  
 Call him the knight that bears two swords,  
 And all the praise his fame accords  
 Make answer when they call."

So parted they toward eventide ;  
 And tender twilight, heavy-eyed,  
 Saw deep down glimmering woodlands ride  
 Balen and Balan side by side,

Till where the leaves grew dense and dim  
 Again they spied from far draw near  
 The presence of the sacred see,  
 But so disguised and strange of cheer  
 That seeing they knew not him.

" Now whither ride ye," Merlin said,  
 " Through shadows that the sun strikes red,  
 Ere night be born or day be dead ?"  
 But they, for doubt half touched with dread,  
 Would say not where their goal might lie.  
 " And thou," said Balen, " what art thou,  
 To walk with shrouded eye and brow ?"  
 He said : " Me lists not show thee now  
 By name what man am I."

" Ill seen is this of thee," said they,  
 " That thou art true in word and way  
 Nor fain to fear the face of day,  
 Who wilt not as a true man say  
 The name it shames not him to bear."

He answered : “ Be it or be it not so,  
 Yet why ye ride this way I know,  
 To meet King Ryons as a foe,  
 And how your hope shall fare.

“ Well, if ye hearken toward my rede,  
 Ill, if ye hear not, shall ye speed.”

“ Ah, now,” they cried, “ thou art ours at need.  
 What Merlin saith we are fain to heed.”

“ Great worship shall ye win,” said he,  
 “ And look that ye do knightly now,  
 For great shall be your need, I trow.”  
 And Balen smiled : “ By knighthood’s vow,  
 The best we may will we.”

Then Merlin bade them turn and take  
 Rest, for their good steeds’ weary sake,  
 Between the highway and the brake,  
 Till starry midnight bade them wake :

Then “ Rise,” he said, “ the king is nigh,  
 Who hath stolen from all his host away  
 With threescore horse in armed array,  
 The goodliest knights that bear his sway  
 And hold his kingdom high.

“ And twenty ride of them before  
 To bear his errand, ere the door  
 Turn of the night, sealed fast no more,  
 And sundawn bid the stars wax hoar ;

For by the starshine of to-night  
 He seeks a leman where she waits  
 His coming, dark and swift as fate’s,  
 And hearkens toward the unopening gates  
 That yield not him to sight.”

Then through the glimmering gloom around  
A shadowy sense of light and sound  
Made, ere the proof thereof were found,  
The brave blithe hearts within them bound,  
And "Where," quoth Balen, "rides the king?"  
But softer spake the seer: "Abide,  
Till hither toward your spears he ride,  
Where all the narrowing woodland side  
Grows dense with boughs that cling."

There in that straitening way they met  
The wild Welsh host against them set,  
And smote their strong king down, ere yet  
His hurrying horde of spears might get  
Fierce vantage of them. Then the fight  
Grew great and joyous as it grew,  
For left and right those brethren slew,  
Till all the lawn waxed red with dew  
More deep than dews of night.

And ere the full fierce tale was read  
Full forty lay before them dead,  
And fast the hurtling remnant fled  
And wist not whither fear had led:  
And toward the king they went again,  
And would have slain him: but he bowed  
Before them, crying in fear aloud  
For grace they gave him, seeing the proud  
Wild king brought lowest of men.

And ere the wildwood leaves were stirred  
With song or wing of wakening bird,  
In Camelot was Merlin's word  
With joy in joyous wonder heard  
That told of Arthur's bitterest foe

Diskingdomed and discomfited.  
 "By whom?" the high king smiled and said.  
 He answered: "Ere the dawn wax red,  
 To-morrow bids you know.

"Two knights whose heart and hope are one  
 And fain to win your grace have done  
 This work whereby if grace be won  
 Their hearts shall hail the enkindling sun  
 With joy more keen and deep than day."  
 And ere the sundawn drank the dew  
 Those brethren with their prisoner drew  
 To the outer guard they gave him to  
 And passed again away.

And Arthur came as toward his guest  
 To greet his foe, and bade him rest  
 As one returned from nobler quest  
 And welcome from the stormbright west,  
 But by what chance he fain would hear.  
 "The chance was hard and strange, sir king,"  
 Quoth Ryons, bowed in thanksgiving.  
 "Who won you?" Arthur said: "the thing  
 Is worth a warrior's ear."

The wild king flushed with pride and shame,  
 Answering: "I know not either name  
 Of those that there against us came  
 And withered all our strength like flame:  
 The knight that bears two swords is one,  
 And one his brother: not on earth  
 May men meet men of knightlier worth  
 Nor mightier born of mortal birth  
 That hail the sovereign sun."

And Arthur said : " I know them not ;  
 But much am I for this, God wot,  
 Beholden to them : Launcelot  
 Nor Tristram, when the war waxed hot  
 Along the marches east and west,  
 Wrought ever nobler work than this."  
 " Ah," Merlin said, " sore pity it is  
 And strange mischance of doom, I wis,  
 That death should mar their quest.

" Balen, the perfect knight that won  
 The sword whose name is malison,  
 And made his deed his doom, is one :  
 Nor hath his brother Balan done  
 Less royal service : not on earth  
 Lives there a nobler knight, more strong  
 Of soul to win men's praise in song,  
 Albeit the light abide not long  
 That lightened round his birth.

" Yea, and of all sad things I know  
 The heaviest and the highest in woe  
 Is this, the doom whose date brings low  
 Too soon in timeless overthrow  
 A head so high, a hope so sure.  
 The greatest moan for any knight  
 That ever won fair fame in fight  
 Shall be for Balen, seeing his might  
 Must now not long endure."

" Alas," King Arthur said, " he hath shown  
 Such love to me-ward that the moan  
 Made of him should be mine alone  
 Above all other, knowing it known  
 I have ill deserved it of him." " Nay,"

Said Merlin, " he shall do for you  
 Much more, when time shall be anew,  
 Than time hath given him chance to do  
 Or hope may think to say.

" But now must be your powers purveyed  
 To meet, ere noon of morn be made  
 To-morrow, all the host arrayed  
 Of this wild foe's wild brother, laid  
 Around against you : see to it well,  
 For now I part from you." And soon,  
 When sundawn slew the withering moon,  
 Two hosts were met to win the boon  
 Whose tale is death's to tell.

A lordly tale of knights and lords  
 For death to tell by count of swords  
 When war's wild harp in all its chords  
 Rang royal triumph, and the hordes  
 Of hurtling foemen rocked and reeled  
 As waves wind-thwarted on the sea,  
 Was told of all that there might be,  
 Till scarce might battle hear or see  
 The fortune of the field.

And many a knight won fame that day  
 When even the serpent soul of Kay  
 Was kindled toward the fiery play  
 As might a lion's be for prey,  
 And won him fame that might not die  
 With passing of his rancorous breath  
 But clung about his life and death  
 As fire that speaks in cloud, and saith  
 What strong men hear and fly.

And glorious works were Arthur's there,  
That lit the battle-darkened air :  
But when they saw before them fare  
Like stars of storm the knight that bare  
Two swords about him girt for fray,  
Balen, and Balan with him, then  
Strong wonder smote the souls of men  
If heaven's own host or hell's deep den  
Had sent them forth to slay.

So keen they rode across the fight,  
So sharp they smote to left and right,  
And made of hurtling darkness light  
With lightning of their swords, till flight  
And fear before them flew like flame,  
That Arthur's self had never known,  
He said, since first his blast was blown,  
Such lords of war as these alone  
That whence he knew not came.

But while the fire of war waxed hot  
The wild king hearkened, hearing not,  
Through storm of spears and arrow-shot,  
For succour toward him from King Lot

And all his host of sea-born men,  
Strong as the strong storm-baffling bird  
Whose cry round Orkney's headlands heard  
Is as the sea's own sovereign word  
That mocks our mortal ken.

For Merlin's craft of prophecy,  
Who wist that one of twain must die,  
Put might in him to say thereby  
Which head should lose its crown, and lie  
Stricken, though loth he were to know

That either life should wane and fail ;  
 Yet most might Arthur's love avail,  
 And still with subtly tempered tale  
 His wile held fast the foe.

With woven words of magic might  
 Wherein the subtle shadow and light  
 Changed hope and fear till fear took flight,  
 He stayed King Lot's fierce lust of fight  
 Till all the wild Welsh war was driven  
 As foam before the wind that wakes  
 With the all-awakening sun, and breaks  
 Strong ships that rue the mirth it makes  
 When grace to slay is given.

And ever hotter lit and higher,  
 As fire that meets encountering fire,  
 Waxed in King Lot his keen desire  
 To bid revenge within him tire  
 On Arthur's ravaged fame and life :  
 Across the waves of war between  
 Fleeted and flashed, unseen and seen,  
 The lustrous likeness of the queen  
 Whom shame had sealed his wife.

But when the woful word was brought  
 That while he tarried, doubting nought,  
 The hope was lost whose goal he sought  
 And all the fight he yearned for fought,  
 His heart was rent for grief and shame,  
 And half his hope was set on flight  
 Till word was given him of a knight  
 Who said : " They are weary and worn with fight,  
 And we more fresh than flame."

And bright and dark as night and day  
 Ere either find the unopening way  
 Clear, and forego the unaltering sway,  
 The sad king's face shone, frowning : " Yea,

I would that every knight of mine  
 Would do his part as I shall do,"  
 He said, " till death or life anew  
 Shall judge between us as is due  
 With wiser doom than thine."

Then thundered all the awakening field  
 With crash of hosts that clashed and reeled,  
 Banner to banner, shield to shield,  
 And spear to splintering spear-shaft, steeled  
 As heart against high heart of man,  
 As hope against high hope of knight  
 To pluck the crest and crown of fight  
 From war's clenched hand by storm's wild light,  
 For blessing given or ban.

All hearts of hearkening men that heard  
 The ban twin-born with blessing, stirrea  
 Like springtide waters, knew the word  
 Whereby the steeds of storm are spurred

With ravenous rapture to destroy,  
 And laughed for love of battle, pierced  
 With passion of tempestuous thirst  
 And hungering hope to assuage it first  
 With draughts of stormy joy.

But sheer ahead of the iron tide  
 That rocked and roared from side to side  
 Rode as the lightning's lord might ride  
 King Lot, whose heart was set to abide  
 All peril of the raging hour,

And all his host of warrior's born  
 Where lands by warring seas are worn  
 Was only by his hands upborne  
 Who gave them pride and power.

But as the sea's hand smites the shore  
 And shatters all the strengths that bore  
 The ravage earth may bear no more,  
 So smote the hand of Pellinore

Charging, a knight of Arthur's chief,  
 And clove his strong steed's neck in twain,  
 And smote him sheer through brow and brain,  
 Falling : and there King Lot lay slain,  
 And knew not wrath or grief.

And all the host of Orkney fled,  
 And many a mother's son lay dead :  
 But when they raised the stricken head  
 Whence pride and power and shame were fled  
 And rage and anguish now cast out,  
 And bore it toward a kingly tomb,  
 The wife whose love had wrought his doom  
 Came thither, fair as morning's bloom  
 And dark as twilight's doubt.

And there her four strong sons and his,  
 Gawain and Gareth, Gaherys  
 And Agravain, whose sword's sharp kiss  
 With sound of hell's own serpent's hiss  
 Should one day turn her life to death,  
 Stood mourning with her : but by these  
 Seeing Mordred as a seer that sees,  
 Anguish of terror bent her knees  
 And caught her shuddering breath.

The splendour of her sovereign eyes  
Flashed darkness deeper than the skies  
Feel or fear when the sunset dies  
On his that felt as midnight rise

Their doom upon them, there undone  
By faith in fear ere thought could yield  
A shadowy sense of days revealed,  
The ravin of the final field,  
The terror of their son.

For Arthur's, as they caught the light  
That sought and durst not seek his sight,  
Darkened, and all his spirit's might  
Withered within him even as night

Withers when sunrise thrills the sea.  
But Mordred's lightened as with fire  
That smote his mother and his sire  
With darkling doom and deep desire  
That bade its darkness be.

And heavier on their hearts the weight  
Sank of the fear that brings forth fate,  
The bitter doubt whose womb is great  
With all the grief and love and hate

That turn to fire men's days on earth.  
And glorious was the funeral made,  
And dark the deepening dread that swayed  
Their darkening souls whose light grew shade  
With sense of death in birth.

## VI

IN autumn, when the wind and sea  
 Rejoice to live and laugh to be,  
 And scarce the blast that curbs the tree  
 And bids before it quail and flee

The fiery foliage, where its brand  
 Is radiant as the seal of spring,  
 Sounds less delight, and waves a wing  
 Less lustrous, life's loud thanksgiving  
 Puts life in sea and land.

High hope in Balen's heart alight  
 Laughed, as from all that clamorous fight  
 He passed and sought not Arthur's sight,  
 Who fain had found his kingliest knight

And made amend for Balen's wrong. . .  
 But Merlin gave his soul to see  
 Fate, rising as a shoreward sea,  
 And all the sorrow that should be  
 Ere hope or fear thought long.

“ O where are they whose hands upbore  
 My battle,” Arthur said, “ before  
 The wild Welsh host's wide rage and roar ?  
 Balen and Balan, Pellinore,  
 Where are they ? ” Merlin answered him

“Balen shall be not long away  
 From sight of you, but night nor day  
 Shall bring his brother back to say  
 If life burn bright or dim.”

“Now, by my faith,” said Arthur then,  
 “Two marvellous knights are they, whose ken  
 Toward battle makes the twain as ten,  
 And Balen most of all born men  
 Passeth of prowess all I know  
 Or ever found or sought to see :  
 Would God he would abide with me  
 To face the times foretold of thee  
 And all the latter woe.”

For there had Merlin shown the king  
 The doom that songs unborn should sing,  
 The gifts that time should rise and bring  
 Of blithe and bitter days to spring  
 As weeds and flowers against the sun.  
 And on the king for fear’s sake fell  
 Sickness, and sorrow deep as hell,  
 Nor even might sleep bid fear farewell  
 If grace to sleep were won.

Down in a meadow green and still  
 He bade the folk that wrought his will  
 Pitch his pavilion, where the chill  
 Soft night would let not rest fulfil  
 His heart wherein dark fears lay deep.  
 And sharp against his hearing cast  
 Came a sound as of horsehoofs fast  
 Passing, that ere their sound were past  
 Aroused him as from sleep.

And forth he looked along the grass  
And saw before his portal pass  
A knight that wailed aloud, "Alas  
That life should find this dolorous pass  
And find no shield from doom and dole!"  
And hearing all his moan, "Abide,  
Fair sir," the king arose and cried,  
"And say what sorrow bids you ride  
So sorrowful of soul."

"My hurt may no man heal, God wot,  
And help of man may speed me not,"  
The sad knight said, "nor change my lot."  
And toward the castle of Melyot

Whose towers arose a league away  
He passed forth sorrowing: and anon,  
Ere well the woful sight were gone,  
Came Balen down the meads that shone,  
Strong, bright, and brave as day.

And seeing the king there stand, the knight  
Drew rein before his face to alight  
In reverence made for love's sake bright  
With joy that set his face alight

As theirs who see, alive, above,  
The sovereign of their souls, whose name  
To them is even as love's own flame  
To enkindle hope that heeds not fame  
And knows no lord but love.

And Arthur smiled on him, and said,  
"Right welcome be thou: by my head,  
I would not wish me better sped.  
For even but now there came and fled  
Before me like a cloud that flies

A knight that made most heavy cheer,  
 I know not wherefore ; nor may fear  
 Or pity give my heart to hear  
 Or lighten on mine eyes.

“ But even for fear’s and pity’s sake  
 Fain were I thou shouldst overtake  
 And fetch again this knight that spake  
 No word of answering grace to make

Reply to mine that hailed him : thou,  
 By force or by goodwill, shalt bring  
 His face before me.” “ Yea, my king,”  
 Quoth Balen, “ and a greater thing  
 Were less than is my vow.

“ I would the task required and heard  
 Were heavier than your sovereign word  
 Hath laid on me : ” and thence he spurred  
 Elate at heart as youth, and stirred

With hope as blithe as fires a boy :  
 And many a mile he rode, and found  
 Far in a forest’s glimmering bound  
 The man he sought afar around  
 And seeing took fire for joy.

And with him went a maiden, fair  
 As flowers aflush with April air.  
 And Balen bade him turn him there  
 To tell the king what woes they were

That bowed him down so sore : and he  
 Made woful answer : “ This should do  
 Great scathe to me, with nought for you  
 Of help that hope might hearken to  
 For boot that may not be.”

And Balen answered : “ I were loth  
To fight as one perforce made wroth  
With one that owes by knighthood’s oath  
One love, one service, and one troth

With me to him whose gracious hand  
Holds fast the helm of knighthood here  
Whereby man’s hope and heart may steer :  
I pray you let not sorrow or fear  
Against his bidding stand.”

The strange knight gazed on him, and spake :  
“ Will you, for Arthur’s royal sake,  
Be warrant for me that I take  
No scathe from strife that man may make ?

Then will I go with you.” And he  
Made joyous answer : “ Yea, for I  
Will be your warrant or will die.”  
And thence they rode with hearts as high  
As men’s that search the sea.

And as by noon’s large light the twain  
Before the tented hall drew rein,  
Suddenly fell the strange knight, slain  
By one that came and went again

And none might see him ; but his spear  
Clove through the body, swift as fire,  
The man whose doom, forefelt as dire,  
Had darkened all his life’s desire,  
As one that death held dear.

And dying he turned his face and said,  
“ Lo now thy warrant that my head  
Should fall not, following forth where led  
A knight whose pledge hath left me dead.  
This darkling manslayer hath to name

Gardon : take thou my goodlier steed,  
 Seeing thine is less of strength and speed,  
 And ride, if thou be knight indeed,  
 Even thither whence we came.

“ And as the maiden’s fair behest  
 Shall bid you follow on my quest,  
 Follow : and when God’s will sees best,  
 Revenge my death, and let me rest  
 As one that lived and died a knight,  
 Unstained of shame alive or dead.”  
 And Balen, wrung with sorrow, said,  
 “ That shall I do : my hand and head  
 I pledge to do you right.”

And thence with sorrowing heart and cheer  
 He rode, in grief that cast out fear  
 Lest death in darkness yet were near,  
 And bore the truncheon of the spear  
 Wherewith the woful knight lay slain  
 To her with whom he rode, and she  
 Still bare it with her, fain to see  
 What righteous doom of God’s might be  
 The darkling manslayer’s bane.

And down a dim deep woodland way  
 They rode between the boughs asway  
 With flickering winds whose flash and play  
 Made sunlight sunnier where the day  
 Laughed, leapt, and fluttered like a bird  
 Caught in a light loose leafy net  
 That earth for amorous heaven had set  
 To hold and see the sundawn yet  
 And hear what morning heard.

There in the sweet soft shifting light  
Across their passage rode a knight  
Flushed hot from hunting as from fight,  
And seeing the sorrow-stricken sight

Made question of them why they rode  
As mourners sick at heart and sad,  
When all alive about them bade  
Sweet earth for heaven's sweet sake be glad  
As heaven for earth's love glowed.

"Me lists not tell you," Balen said.  
The strange knight's face grew keen and red ;  
"Now, might my hand but keep my head,  
Even here should one of twain lie dead

Wore he no better armed than I."  
And Balen spake with smiling speed,  
Where scorn and courtesy kept heed  
Of either : "That should little need :  
Not here shall either die."

And all the cause he told him through  
As one that feared not though he knew  
All : and the strange knight spake anew,  
Saying : "I will part no more from you

While life shall last me." So they went  
Where he might arm himself to ride,  
And rode across wild ways and wide  
To where against a churchyard side

A hermit's harbour leant.

And there against them riding came  
Fleet as the lightning's laugh and flame  
The invisible evil, even the same  
They sought and might not curse by name  
As hell's foul child on earth set free,

And smote the strange knight through, and fled,  
And left the mourners by the dead.

“Alas, again,” Sir Balen said,  
“This wrong he hath done to me.”

And there they laid their dead to sleep  
Royally, lying where wild winds keep  
Keen watch and wail more soft and deep  
Than where men’s choirs bid music weep

And song like incense heave and swell.  
And forth again they rode, and found  
Before them, dire in sight and sound,  
A castle girt about and bound  
With sorrow like a spell.

Above it seened the sun at noon  
Sad as a wintry withering moon  
That shudders while the waste wind’s tune  
Craves ever none may guess what boon,

But all may know the boon for dire.  
And evening on its darkness fell  
More dark than very death’s farewell,  
And night about it hung like hell,  
Whose fume the dawn made fire.

And Balen lighted down and passed  
Within the gateway, whence no blast  
Rang as the sheer portcullis, cast  
Suddenly down, fell, and made fast  
The gate behind him, whence he spied  
A sudden rage of men without  
And ravin of a murderous rout  
That girt the maiden hard about  
With death on either side.

And seeing that shame and peril, fear  
Bade wrath and grief awake and hear  
What shame should say in fame's wide ear  
If she, by sorrow sealed more dear

Than joy might make her, so should die :  
And up the tower's curled stair he sprang  
As one that flies death's deadliest fang,  
And leapt right out amid their gang  
As fire from heaven on high.

And they thereunder seeing the knight  
Unhurt among their press alight  
And bare his sword for chance of fight  
Stood from him, loth to strive or smite,

And bade him hear their woful word,  
That not the maiden's death they sought ;  
But there through years too dire for thought  
Had lain their lady stricken, and nought

Might heal her : and he heard.

For there a maiden clean and whole  
In virgin body and virgin soul,  
Whose name was writ on royal roll,  
That would but stain a silver bowl

With offering of her stainless blood,  
Therewith might heal her : so they stayed  
For hope's sad sake each blameless maid  
There journeying in that dolorous shade  
Whose bloom was bright in bud.

No hurt nor harm to her it were  
If she should yield a sister there  
Some tribute of her blood, and fare  
Forth with this joy at heart to bear,  
That all unhurt and unafraid

This grace she had here by God's grace wrought.  
 And kindling all with kindly thought  
 And love that saw save love's self nought,  
 Shone, smiled, and spake the maid.

"Good knight of mine, good will have I  
 To help this healing though I die."  
 "Nay," Balen said, "but love may try  
 What help in living love may lie.

—I will not lose the life of her  
 While my life lasteth." So she gave  
 The tribute love was fain to crave,  
 But might not heal though fain to save,  
 Were God's grace helpfuller.

Another maid in later Mays  
 Won with her life that woful praise,  
 And died. But they, when surging day's  
 Deep tide fulfilled the dawn's wide ways,  
 Rode forth, and found by day or night  
 No chance to cross their wayfaring  
 Till when they saw the fourth day spring  
 A knight's hall gave them harbouring  
 Rich as a king's house might.

And while they sat at meat and spake  
 Words bright and kind as grace might make  
 Sweet for true knighthood's kindly sake,  
 They heard a cry beside them break  
 The still-souled joy of blameless rest.  
 "What noise is this?" quoth Balen. "Nay,"  
 His knightly host made answer, "may  
 Our grief not grieve you though I say  
 How here I dwell unblest.

“ Not many a day has lived and died  
Since at a tourney late I tried  
My strength to smite and turn and ride  
Against a knight of kinglike pride,

King Pellam’s brother : twice I smote  
The splendour of his strength to dust :  
And he, fulfilled of hate’s fierce lust,  
Swore vengeance, pledged for hell to trust,  
And keen as hell’s wide throat.

“ Invisible as the spirit of night  
That heaven and earth in depth and height  
May see not by the mild moon’s light  
Nor even when stars would grant them sight,

He walks and slays as plague’s blind breath  
Slays : and my son, whose anguish here  
Makes moan perforce that mars our cheer,  
He wounded, even ere love might fear  
That hate were strong as death.

“ Nor may my son be whole till he  
Whose stroke through him hath stricken me  
Shall give again his blood to be  
Our healing : yet may no man see

This felon, clothed with darkness round  
And keen as lightning’s life.” Thereon  
Spake Balen, and his presence shone  
Even as the sun’s when stars are gone,  
That hear dawn’s trumpet sound.

“ That knight I know : two knights of mine,  
Two comrades, sealed by faith’s bright sign,  
Whose eyes as ours that live should shine,  
And drink the golden sunlight’s wine  
With joy’s thanksgiving that they live,

He hath slain in even the same blind wise :  
 Were all wide wealth beneath the skies  
 Mine, might I meet him, eyes on eyes,  
 All would I laugh to give."

His host made answer, and his gaze  
 Grew bright with trust as dawn's moist maze  
 With fire : " Within these twenty days,  
 King Pellam, lord of Lystenayse,

Holds feast through all this country cried,  
 And there before the knightly king  
 May no knight come except he bring  
 For witness of his wayfaring  
 His paramour or bride.

" And there that day, so soon to shine,  
 This knight, your feion toe and mine,  
 Shall show, full-flushed with bloodred wine,  
 The fierce false face whereon we pine  
 To wreak the wrong he hath wrought us, bare  
 As shame should see and brand it." " Then,"  
 Said Balen, " shall he give again  
 His blood to heal your son, and men  
 Shall see death blind him there."

" Forth will we fare to-morrow," said  
 His host : and forth, as sunrise led,  
 They rode ; and fifteen days were fled  
 Ere toward their goal their steeds had sped.

And there alighting might they find  
 For Balen's host no place to rest,  
 Who came without a gentler guest  
 Beside him : and that household's best  
 Bade leave his sword behind.

“ Nay,” Balen said, “ that do I not :  
 My country’s custom stands, God wot,  
 That none whose lot is knighthood’s lot,  
 To ride where chance as fire is hot

With hope or promise given of fight,  
 Shall fail to keep, for knighthood’s part,  
 His weapon with him as his heart ;  
 And as I came will I depart,  
 Or hold herein my right.”

Then gat he leave to wear his sword  
 Beside the strange king’s festal board  
 Where feasted many a knight and lord  
 In seemliness of fair accord :

And Balen asked of one beside,  
 “ Is there not in this court, if fame  
 Keep faith, a knight that hath to name  
 Garlon ? ” and saying that word of shame,  
 He scanned that place of pride.

“ Yonder he goeth against the light,  
 He with the face as swart as night,”  
 Quoth the other : “ but he rides to fight  
 Hid round by charms from all men’s sight,

And many a noble knight he hath slain,  
 Being wrapt in darkness deep as hell  
 And silence dark as shame.” “ Ah, well,”  
 Said Balen, “ is that he ? the spell  
 May be the sorcerer’s bane.”

Then Balen gazed upon him long,  
 And thought, “ If here I wreak my wrong,  
 Alive I may not scape, so strong  
 The felon’s friends about him throng ;  
 And if I leave him here alive,

This chance perchance may life not give  
 Again : much evil, if he live,  
 He needs must do, should fear forgive  
 When wrongs bid strike and strive."

And Garlon, seeing how Balen's eye  
 Dwelt on him as his heart waxed high  
 With joy in wrath to see him nigh,  
 Rose wolf-like with a wolfish cry

And crossed and smote him on the face,  
 Saying, " Knight, what wouldest thou with me ?  
 Eat,  
 For shame, and gaze not : eat thy meat :  
 Do that thou art come for : stands thy seat  
 Next ours of royal race ? "

" Well hast thou said : thy rede rings true ;  
 That which I came for will I do,"  
 Quoth Balen : forth his fleet sword flew,  
 And clove the head of Garlon through

Clean to the shoulders. Then he cried  
 Loud to his lady, " Give me here  
 The truncheon of the shameful spear  
 Wherewith he slew your knight, when fear  
 Bade hate in darkness ride."

And gladly, bright with grief made glad,  
 She gave the truncheon as he bade,  
 For still she bare it with her, sad  
 And strong in hopeless hope she had,  
 Through all dark days of thwarting fear,  
 To see if doom should fall aright  
 And as God's fire-fraught thunder smite  
 That head, clothed round with hell-faced night,  
 Bare now before her here.

And Balen smote therewith the dead  
 Dark felon's body through, and said  
 Aloud, "With even this truncheon, red  
 With baser blood than brave men bled

Whom in thy shameful hand it slew,  
 Thou hast slain a nobler knight, and now  
 It clings and cleaves thy body : thou  
 Shalt cleave again no brave man's brow,  
 Though hell would aid anew."

And toward his host he turned and spake ;  
 "Now for your son's long-suffering sake  
 Blood ye may fetch enough, and take  
 Wherewith to heal his hurt, and make

Death warm as life." Then rose a cry  
 Loud as the wind's when stormy spring  
 Makes all the woodland rage and ring :  
 "Thou hast slain my brother," said the king,  
 "And here with him shalt die."

"Ay?" Balen laughed him answer. "Well,  
 Do it then thyself." And the answer fell  
 Fierce as a blast of hate from hell,  
 "No man of mine that with me dwell

Shall strike at thee but I their lord  
 For love of this my brother slain."  
 And Pellam caught and grasped a main  
 A grim great weapon, fierce and fain  
 To feed his hungering sword.

And eagerly he smote, and sped  
 Not well : for Balen's blade, yet red  
 With lifeblood of the murderous dead,  
 Between the swordstroke and his head  
 Shone, and the strength of the eager stroke

Shore it in sunder : then the knight,  
Naked and weaponless for fight,  
Ran seeking him a sword to smite  
As hope within him woke.

And so their flight for deathward fast  
From chamber forth to chamber passed  
Where lay no weapon, till the last  
Whose doors made way for Balen cast  
Upon him as a sudden spell  
Wonder that even as lightning leapt  
Across his heart and eyes, and swept  
As storm across his soul that kept  
Wild watch, and watched not well.

For there the deed he did, being near  
Death's danger, breathless as the deer  
Driven hard to bay, but void of fear,  
Brought sorrow down for many a year  
On many a man in many a land.  
All glorious shone that chamber, bright  
As burns at sunrise heaven's own height :  
With cloth of gold the bed was dight,  
That flamed on either hand.

And one he saw within it lie :  
A table of all clear gold thereby  
Stood stately, fair as morning's eye,  
With four strong silver pillars, high  
And firm as faith and hope may be :  
And on it shone the gift he sought,  
A spear most marvellously wrought,  
That when his eye and handgrip caught  
Small fear at heart had he.

Right on King Pellam then, as fire  
Turns when the thwarting winds wax higher,  
He turned, and smote him down. So dire  
The stroke was, when his heart's desire  
Struck, and had all its fill of hate,  
That as the king fell swooning down  
Fell the walls, rent from base to crown,  
Prone as prone seas that break and drown  
Ships fraught with doom for freight.

And there for three days' silent space  
Balen and Pellam face to face  
Lay dead or deathlike, and the place  
Was death's blind kingdom, till the grace  
That God had given the sacred seer  
For counsel or for comfort led  
His Merlin thither, and he said,  
Standing between the quick and dead,  
"Rise up, and rest not here."

And Balen rose and set his eyes  
Against the seer's as one that tries  
His heart against the sea's and sky's  
And fears not if he lives or dies,  
Saying, "I would have my damosel,  
Ere I fare forth, to fare with me."  
And sadly Merlin answered, "See  
Where now she lies; death knows if she  
Shall now fare ill or well.

"And in this world we meet no more,  
Balen." And Balen, sorrowing sore,  
Though fearless yet the heart he bore  
Beat toward the life that lay before,  
Rode forth through many a wild waste land

Where men cried out against him, mad  
With grievous faith in fear that bade  
Their wrath make moan for doubt they had  
Lest hell had armed his hand.

For in that chamber's wondrous shrine  
Was part of Christ's own blood, the wine  
Shed of the true triumphal vine  
Whose growth bids earth's deep darkness shine  
As heaven's deep light through the air and sea ;  
That mystery toward our northern shore  
Arimathean Joseph bore  
For healing of our sins of yore,  
That grace even there might be.

And with that spear there shrined apart  
Was Christ's side smitten to the heart.  
And fiercer than the lightning's dart  
The stroke was, and the deathlike smart  
Wherewith, nigh drained of blood and breath,  
The king lay stricken as one long dead :  
And Joseph's was the blood there shed,  
For near akin was he that bled,  
Near even as life to death.

And therefore fell on all that land  
Sorrow : for still on either hand,  
As Balen rode alone and scanned  
Bright fields and cities built to stand  
Till time should break them, dead men lay ;  
And loud and long from all their folk  
Living, one cry that cursed him broke ;  
Three countries had his dolorous stroke  
Slain, or should surely slay.

## VII

IN winter, when the year burns low  
 As fire wherein no firebrands glow,  
 And winds dishevel as they blow  
 The lovely stormy wings of snow,  
 The hearts of northern men burn bright  
 With joy that mocks the joy of spring  
 To hear all heaven's keen clarions ring  
 Music that bids the spirit sing  
 And day give thanks for night.

Aloud and dark as hell or hate  
 Round Balen's head the wind of fate  
 Blew storm and cloud from death's wide gate :  
 But joy as grief in him was great  
 To face God's doom and live or die,  
 Sorrowing for ill wrought unaware,  
 Rejoicing in desire to dare  
 All ill that innocence might bear  
 With changeless heart and eye.

Yet passing fain he was when past  
 Those lands and woes at length and last.  
 Eight times, as thence he fared forth fast,  
 Dawn rose and even was overcast  
 With starry darkness dear as day,

Before his venturous quest might meet  
 Adventure, seeing within a sweet  
 Green low-lying forest, hushed in heat,  
 A tower that barred his way.

Strong summer, dumb with rapture, bound  
 With golden calm the woodlands round  
 Wherethrough the knight forth faring found  
 A knight that on the greenwood ground  
 Sat mourning : fair he was to see,  
 And moulded as for love or fight  
 A maiden's dreams might frame her knight ;  
 But sad in joy's far-flowering sight  
 As grief's blind thrall might be.

“ God save you,” Balen softly said,  
 “ What grief bows down your heart and head  
 Thus, as one sorrowing for his dead ?  
 Tell me, if haply I may stead  
 In aught your sorrow, that I may.”  
 “ Sir knight,” that other said, “ thy word  
 Makes my grief heavier that I heard.”  
 And pity and wonder inly stirred  
 Drew Balen thence away.

And so withdrawn with silent speed  
 He saw the sad knight's stately steed,  
 A war-horse meet for warrior's need,  
 That none who passed might choose but heed,  
 So strong he stood, so great, so fair,  
 With eyes afire for flight or fight,  
 A joy to look on, mild in might,  
 And swift and keen and kind as light,  
 And all as clear of care.

And Balen, gazing on him, heard  
 Again his master's woful word  
 Sound sorrow through the calm unstirred  
 By fluttering wind or flickering bird,

Thus : " Ah, fair lady and faithless, why  
 Break thy pledged faith to meet me ? soon  
 An hour beyond thy trothplight noon  
 Shall strike my death-bell, and thy boon  
 Is this, that here I die.

" My curse for all thy gifts may be  
 Heavier than death or night on thee ;  
 For now this sword thou gavest me  
 Shall set me from thy bondage free."

And there the man had died self-slain,  
 But Balen leapt on him and caught  
 The blind fierce hand that fain had wrought  
 Self-murder, stung with fire of thought,  
 As rage makes anguish fain.

Then, mad for thwarted grief, " Let go  
 My hand," the fool of wrath and woe  
 Cried, " or I slay thee." Scarce the glow  
 In Balen's cheek and eye might show,

As dawn shows day while seas lie chill,  
 He heard, though pity took not heed,  
 But smiled and spake, " That shall not need  
 What man may do to bid you speed  
 I, so God speed me, will."

And the other craved his name, beguiled  
 By hope that made his madness mild.  
 Again Sir Balen spake and smiled :  
 " My name is Balen, called the Wild  
 By knights whom kings and courts make tame,

Because I ride alone afar  
 And follow but my soul for star."  
 " Ah, sir, I know the knight you are  
 And all your fiery fame.

" The knight that bears two swords I know,  
 Most praised of all men, friend and foe,  
 For prowess of your hands, that show  
 Dark war the way where balefires glow  
 And kindle glory like the dawn's."  
 So spake the sorrowing knight, and stood  
 As one whose heart fresh hope made good :  
 And forth they rode by wold and wood  
 And down the glimmering lawns.

And Balen craved his name who rode  
 Beside him, where the wild wood glowed  
 With joy to feel how noontide flowed  
 Through glade and glen and rough green road  
 Till earth grew joyful as the sea.  
 " My name is Garnysshe of the Mount,  
 A poor man's son of none account,"  
 He said, " where springs of loftier fount  
 Laugh loud with pride to be.

" But strength in weakness lives and stands  
 As rocks that rise through shifting sands ;  
 And for the prowess of my hands  
 One made me knight and gave me lands,  
 Duke Hermel, lord from far to near,  
 Our prince ; and she that loved me—she  
 I love, and deemed she loved but me,  
 His daughter, pledged her faith to be  
 Ere now beside me here."

And Balen, brief of speech as light  
 Whose word, beheld of depth and height,  
 Strikes silence through the stars of night,  
 Spake, and his face as dawn's grew bright,

For hope to help a happier man,  
 "How far then lies she hence?" "By this,"  
 Her lover sighed and said, "I wis,  
 Not six fleet miles the passage is,  
 And straight as thought could span."

So rode they swift and sure, and found  
 A castle walled and dyked around :  
 And Balen, as a warrior bound  
 On search where hope might fear to sound

The darkness of the deeps of doubt,  
 Made entrance through the guardless gate  
 As life, while hope in life grows great,  
 Makes way between the doors of fate  
 That death may pass thereout.

Through many a glorious chamber, wrought  
 For all delight that love's own thought  
 Might dream or dwell in, Balen sought  
 And found of all he looked for nought,

For like a shining shell her bed  
 Shone void and vacant of her : thence  
 Through devious wonders bright and dense  
 He passed and saw with shame-struck sense  
 Where shame and faith lay dead.

Down in a sweet small garden, fair  
 With flowerful joy in the ardent air,  
 He saw, and raged with loathing. where  
 She lay with love-dishevelled hair  
 Beneath a broad bright laurel tree

And clasped in amorous arms a knight,  
 The unloveliest that his scornful sight  
 Had dwelt on yet ; a shame the bright  
 Broad noon might shrink to see.

And thence in wrathful hope he turned,  
 Hot as the heart within him burned,  
 To meet the knight whose love, so spurned  
 And spat on and made nought of, yearned  
 And dreamed and hoped and lived in vain,  
 And said, " I have found her sleeping fast,"  
 And led him where the shadows cast  
 From leaves wherethrough light winds ran past  
 Screened her from sun and rain.

But Garnysshe, seeing, reeled as he stood  
 Like a tree, kingliest of the wood,  
 Half hewn through : and the burning blood  
 Through lips and nostrils burst aflood :

And gathering back his rage and might  
 As broken breakers rally and roar  
 The loud wind down that drives off shore,  
 He smote their heads off : there no more  
 Their life might shame the light.

Then turned he back toward Balen, mad  
 With grief, and said, " The grief I had  
 Was nought : ere this my life was glad :  
 Thou hast done this deed : I was but sad  
 And fearful how my hope might fare :  
 I had lived my sorrow down, hadst thou  
 Not shown me what I saw but now."  
 The sorrow and scorn on Balen's brow  
 Bade silence curb him there.

And Balen answered : " What I did  
 I did to hearten thee and bid  
 Thy courage know that shame should rid  
 A man's high heart of love that hid

Blind shame within its core : God knows,  
 I did, to set a bondman free,  
 But as I would thou hadst done by me,  
 That seeing what love must die to see  
 Love's end might well be woe's."

" Alas," the woful weakling said,  
 " I have slain what most I loved : I have shed  
 The blood most near my heart : the head  
 Lies cold as earth, defiled and dead,

That all my life was lighted by,  
 That all my soul bowed down before,  
 And now may bear with life no more :  
 For now my sorrow that I bore  
 Is twofold, and I die."

Then with his red wet sword he rove  
 His breast in sunder, where it clove  
 Life, and no pulse against it strove,  
 So sure and strong the deep stroke drove

Deathward : and Balen, seeing him dead,  
 Rode thence, lest folk would say he had slain  
 Those three : and ere three days again  
 Had seen the sun's might wax and wane,  
 Far forth he had spurred and sped.

And riding past a cross whereon  
 Broad golden letters written shone,  
 Saying, " No knight born may ride alone  
 Forth toward this castle," and all the stone  
 Glowed in the sun's glare even as though

Blood stained it from the crucified  
Dead burden of one that there had died,  
An old hoar man he saw beside  
    Whose face was wan as woe.

“Balen the Wild,” he said, “this way  
Thy way lies not: thou hast passed to-day  
Thy bands: but turn again, and stay  
Thy passage, while thy soul hath sway  
    Within thee, and through God’s good power  
It will avail thee:” and anon  
His likeness as a cloud was gone,  
And Balen’s heart within him shone  
    Clear as the cloudless hour.

Nor fate nor fear might overcast  
The soul now near its peace at last.  
Suddenly, thence as forth he past,  
A mighty and a deadly blast

    Blown of a hunting-horn he heard,  
As when the chase hath nobly sped.  
“That blast is blown for me,” he said,  
“The prize am I who am yet not dead,”  
    And smiled upon the word.

As toward a royal hart’s death rang  
That note, whence all the loud wood sang  
With winged and living sound that sprang  
Like fire, and keen as fire’s own fang  
    Pierced the sweet silence that it slew.  
But nought like death or strife was here:  
Fair semblance and most goodly cheer  
They made him, they whose troop drew near  
    As death among them drew.

A hundred ladies well arrayed  
 And many a knight well weaponed made  
 That kindly show of cheer : the glade  
 Shone round them till its very shade

Lightened and laughed from grove to lawn  
 To hear and see them : so they brought  
 Within a castle fair as thought  
 Could dream that wizard hands had wrought  
 The guest among them drawn.

All manner of glorious joy was there :  
 Harping and dancing, loud and fair,  
 And minstrelsy that made of air  
 Fire, so like fire its raptures were.

Then the chief lady spake on high :  
 " Knight with the two swords, one of two  
 Must help you here or fall from you :  
 For needs you now must have ado  
 And joust with one hereby.

" A good knight guards an island here  
 Against all swords that chance brings near,  
 And there with stroke of sword and spear  
 Must all for whom these halls make cheer  
 Fight, and redeem or yield up life."

" An evil custom," Balen said,  
 " Is this, that none whom chance hath led  
 Hither, if knighthood crown his head,  
 May pass unstirred to strife."

" You shall not have ado to fight  
 Here save against one only knight,"  
 She said, and all her face grew bright  
 As hell-fire, lit with hungry light  
 That wicked laughter touched with flame.

“ Well, since I shall thereto,” said he,  
 “ I am ready at heart as death for me :  
 Fain would I be where death should be  
 And life should lose its name.

“ But travelling men whose goal afar  
 Shines as a cloud-constraining star  
 Are often weary, and wearier are  
 Their steeds that feel each fret and jar

Wherewith the wild ways wound them : yet,  
 Albeit my horse be weary, still  
 My heart is nowise weary ; will  
 Sustains it even till death fulfil  
 My trust upon him set.”

“ Sir,” said a knight thereby that stood,  
 “ Meseems your shield is now not good  
 But worn with warrior work, nor could  
 Sustain in strife the strokes it would :

A larger will I lend you.” “ Ay,  
 Thereof I thank you,” Balen said,  
 Being single of heart as one that read  
 No face aright whence faith had fled,  
 Nor dreamed that faith could fly.

And so he took that shield unknown  
 And left for treason’s touch his own,  
 And toward that island rode alone,  
 Nor heard the blast against him blown

Sound in the wind’s and water’s sound,  
 But hearkening toward the stream’s edge heard  
 Nought save the soft stream’s rippling word,  
 Glad with the gladness of a bird,  
 That sang to the air around.

And Balen rose again from swoon  
 First, and went toward him : all too soon  
 He too then rose, and the evil boon  
 Of strength came back, and the evil tune  
 Of battle unnatural made again  
 Mad music as for death's wide ear  
 Listening and hungering toward the near  
 Last sigh that life or death might hear  
 At last from dying men.

Balan smote Balen first, and clove  
 His lifted shield that rose and strove  
 In vain against the stroke that drove  
 Down : as the web that morning wove  
 Of glimmering pearl from spray to spray  
 Dies when the strong sun strikes it, so  
 Shrank the steel, tempered thrice to show  
 Strength, as the mad might of the blow  
 Shore Balen's helm away.

Then turning as a turning wave  
 Against the land-wind, blind and brave  
 In hope that dreams despair may save,  
 With even the unhappy sword that gave  
 The gifts of fame and fate in one  
 He smote his brother, and there had nigh  
 Felled him : and while they breathed, his eye  
 Glanced up, and saw beneath the sky  
 Sights fairer than the sun.

The towers of all the castle there  
 Stood full of ladies, blithe and fair  
 As the earth beneath and the amorous air  
 About them and above them were :  
 So toward the blind and fateful fight

Again those brethren went, and sore  
 Were all the strokes they smote and bore,  
 And breathed again, and fell once more  
 To battle in their sight.

With blood that either spilt and bled  
 Was all the ground they fought on red,  
 And each knight's hauberk hewn and shred  
 Left each unmailed and naked, shed

From off them even as mantles cast :  
 And oft they breathed, and drew but breath  
 Brief as the word strong sorrow saith,  
 And poured and drank the draught of death,  
 Till fate was full at last.

And Balan, younger born than he  
 Whom darkness bade him slay, and be  
 Slain, as in mist where none may see  
 If aught abide or fall or flee,  
 Drew back a little and laid him down,  
 Dying : but Balen stood, and said,  
 As one between the quick and dead  
 Might stand and speak, " What good knight's head  
 Hath won this mortal crown ?

" What knight art thou ? for never I  
 Who now beside thee dead shall die  
 Found yet the knight afar or nigh  
 That matched me." Then his brother's eye  
 Flashed pride and love ; he spake and smiled  
 And felt in death life's quickening flame,  
 And answered : " Balan is my name,  
 The good knight Balen's brother ; fame  
 Calls and miscalls him wild."

The cry from Balen's lips that sprang  
 Sprang sharper than his sword's stroke rang.  
 More keen than death's or memory's fang,  
 Through sense and soul the shuddering pang  
 Shivered : and scarce he had cried, " Alas  
 That ever I should see this day,"  
 When sorrow swooned from him away  
 As blindly back he fell, and lay  
 Where sleep lets anguish pass.

But Balan rose on hands and knees  
 And crawled by childlike dim degrees  
 Up toward his brother, as a breeze  
 Creeps wingless over sluggard seas  
 When all the wind's heart fails it : so  
 Beneath their mother's eyes had he,  
 A babe that laughed with joy to be,  
 Made toward him standing by her knee  
 For love's sake long ago.

Then, gathering strength up for a space,  
 From off his brother's dying face  
 With dying hands that wrought apace  
 While death and life would grant them grace  
 He loosed his helm and knew not him,  
 So scored with blood it was, and hewn  
 Athwart with darkening wounds : but soon  
 Life strove and shuddered through the swoon  
 Wherein its light lay dim.

And sorrow set these chained words free :  
 " O Balan, O my brother ! me  
 Thou hast slain, and I, my brother, thee :  
 And now far hence, on shore and sea,  
 Shall all the wide world speak of us."

“ Alas,” said Balan, “ that I might  
 Not know you, seeing two swords were dight  
 About you ; now the unanswering sight  
 Hath here found answer thus.

“ Because you bore another shield  
 Than yours, that even ere youth could wield  
 Like arms with manhood’s tried and steeled  
 Shone as my star of battle-field,

I deemed it surely might not be  
 My brother.” Then his brother spake  
 Fiercely : “ Would God, for thy sole sake,  
 I had my life again, to take  
 Revenge for only thee !

“ For all this deadly work was wrought  
 Of one false knight’s false word and thought,  
 Whose mortal craft and counsel caught  
 And snared my faith who doubted nought,

And made me put my shield away.  
 Ah, might I live, I would destroy  
 That castle for its customs : joy  
 There makes of grief a deadly toy,  
 And death makes night of day.”

“ Well done were that, if aught were done  
 Well ever here beneath the sun,”

Said Balan : “ better work were none :  
 For hither since I came and won  
 A woful honour born of death,  
 When here my hap it was to slay  
 A knight who kept this island way,  
 I might not pass by night or day  
 Hence, as this token saith.

“ No more shouldst thou, for all the might  
 Of heart and hand that seals thee knight  
 Most noble of all that see the light,  
 Brother, hadst thou but slain in fight

Me, and arisen unscathed and whole,  
 As would to God thou hadst risen ! though here  
 Light is as darkness, hope as fear,  
 And love as hate : and none draws near  
 Save toward a mortal goal.”

Then, fair as any poison-flower  
 Whose blossom blights the withering bower  
 Whereon its blasting breath has power,  
 Forth fared the lady of the tower

With many a lady and many a knight,  
 And came across the water-way  
 Even where on death’s dim border lay  
 Those brethren sent of her to slay  
 And die in kindless fight.

And all those hard light hearts were swayed  
 With pity passing like a shade  
 That stays not, and may be not stayed,  
 To hear the mutual moan they made,

Each to behold his brother die,  
 Saying, “ Both we came out of one tomb,  
 One star-crossed mother’s woful womb,  
 And so within one grave-pit’s gloom  
 Untimely shall we lie.”

And Balan prayed, as God should bless  
 That lady for her gentleness,  
 That where the battle’s mortal stress  
 Had made for them perforce to press  
 The bed whence never man may rise

They twain, free now from hopes and fears,  
Might sleep ; and she, as one that hears,  
Bowed her bright head : and very tears  
Fell from her cold fierce eyes.

Then Balen prayed her send a priest  
To housel them, that ere they ceased  
The hanel of the heavenly feast  
That fills with light from the answering east  
The sunset of the life of man  
Might bless them, and their lips be kissed  
With death's requickening eucharist,  
And death's and life's dim sunlit mist  
Pass as a stream that ran.

And so their dying rites were done :  
And Balen, seeing the death-struck sun  
Sink, spake as he whose goal is won :  
" Now, when our trophied tomb is one,  
And over us our tale is writ,  
How two that loved each other, two  
Born and begotten brethren, slew  
Each other, none that reads anew  
Shall choose but weep for it.

" And no good knight and no good man  
Whose eye shall ever come to scan  
The record of the imperious ban  
That made our life so sad a span  
Shall read or hear, who shall not pray  
For us for ever." Then anon  
Died Balan ; but the sun was gone,  
And deep the stars of midnight shone,  
Ere Balen passed away.

And there low lying, as hour on hour  
Fled, all his life in all its flower  
Came back as in a sunlit shower  
Of dreams, when sweet-souled sleep has power  
    On life less sweet and glad to be.  
He drank the draught of life's first wine  
Again: he saw the moorland shine,  
The rioting rapids of the Tyne,  
    The woods, the cliffs, the sea.

The joy that lives at heart and home,  
The joy to rest, the joy to roam,  
The joy of crags and scaurs he clomb,  
The rapture of the encountering foam  
    Embraced and breasted of the boy,  
The first good steed his knees bestrode,  
The first wild sound of songs that flowed  
Through ears that thrilled and heart that glowed,  
    Fulfilled his death with joy.

So, dying not as a coward that dies  
And dares not look in death's dim eyes  
Straight as the stars on seas and skies  
Whence moon and sun recoil and rise,  
    He looked on life and death, and slept.  
And there with morning Merlin came,  
And on the tomb that told their fame  
He wrote by Balan's Balen's name,  
    And gazed thereon, and wept.

For all his heart within him yearned  
With pity like as fire that burned.  
The fate his fateful eye discerned  
Far off now dimmed it, ere he turned  
    His face toward Camelot, to tell

Arthur of all the storms that woke  
Round Balen, and the dolorous stroke,  
And how that last blind battle broke  
    The consummated spell.

“ Alas,” King Arthur said, “ this day  
I have heard the worst that woe might say :  
For in this world that wanes away  
I know not two such knights as they.”

    This is the tale that memory writes  
Of men whose names like stars shall stand,  
Balen and Balan, sure of hand,  
Two brethren of Northumberland,  
    In life and death good knights.



# ATALANTA IN CALYDON

A TRAGEDY

*Toὺς ζῶντας εὖ δρᾶν· κατθαυῶν δὲ πᾶς ἀνὴρ  
Γῆ καὶ σκιά· τὸ μηδὲν εἰς οὐδὲν δέπει*

*Εὐρ. Fr. Mel. 20 (537)*



TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

I NOW DEDICATE, WITH EQUAL AFFECTION, REVERENCE, AND REGRET, A  
POEM INSCRIBED TO HIM WHILE YET ALIVE IN WORDS WHICH ARE NOW  
RETAINED BECAUSE THEY WERE LAID BEFORE HIM; AND TO WHICH, RATHER  
THAN CANCEL THEM, I HAVE ADDED SUCH OTHERS AS WERE EVOKED BY  
THE NEWS OF HIS DEATH, THAT THOUGH LOSING THE PLEASURE I MAY  
NOT LOSE THE HONOUR OF INSCRIBING IN FRONT OF MY WORK THE HIGHEST  
OF CONTEMPORARY NAMES.



φέρει δὴ Βορέηθεν ἀπότροπος' ἀλλά σε Νυμφα  
    ήγαγον ἀσπασίαν ἡδύπνουι καθ' ἄλα,  
πληροῦσσαι μέλιτος θεόθεν στόμα, μή τι Ποσειδῶν  
    βλάψῃ, ἐν ὡσὶν ἔχων σὴν μελίγηρυν ὄπα.  
τοῖς ἀσιδὸς ἔφυσ· ἡμεῖς δ' ἔτι κλαίομεν, οὐ σου  
    δευθμεθ' οἰχομένου, καί σε ποθοῦμεν ἀεί.  
εἴπε δὲ Πιερίδων τις ἀναστρεφθεῖσα πρὸς ἄλλην  
    ῆλθεν, ἵδον, πάντων φίλατας ἦλθε βροτῶν,  
στεμματα δρεψάμενος νεοθηλέα χερσὸν γεραιαῖς,  
    καὶ πολιὺν δάφναις ἀμφεκάλυψε κάρα,  
ἡδὺ τι Σικελικαῖς ἐπὶ τηκτίσιν, ἡδὺ τι χόρδαις,  
    ἀσόμενος· πολλὴν γάρ μετέβαλλε λύραν,  
τολλάκι δ' ἐν βήσσαισι καθῆμενον εῦρεν 'Απόλλων,  
    ἴνθεσι δ' ἔστεψεν, τερκυὰ δ' ἔδωκε λέγειν,  
Πᾶνα τ' ἀείμνηστὸν τε Πίτυν Κόρυθόν τε δύσεδρον,  
    ἥν τ' ἐφίλησε θεὰν θυητὸς 'Αμαδρύαδα·  
πόντου δ' ἐν μεγάροισιν ἐκοίμισε Κυμοδάμειαν,  
    τήν τ' 'Αγαμεμνονίαν παῖδ' ἀπέδωκε πατρὶ,  
πρὸς δ' ἱεροὺς Δελφοὺς θεόπληκτον ἔπειμψεν 'Ορέστην  
τειρόμενον στυγερᾶς ἔνθι καὶ ἔνθα θεᾶς.



φέχεο δὴ καὶ ἄνευθε φίλων καὶ ἄνευθεν ἀοιδῆς,  
δρεψύμενος μαλακῆς ἄνθεα Περσεφόνης.  
φέχεο· κούκ λέπτη, κούκ αὖ ποτέ σοι παρεδοῦμαι  
ἄζόμενος, χειρῶν χερσὸν θιγῶν δοῖαις·  
νῦν δ' αὖ μησάμενον γλυκύπικρος ὑπῆλυθεν αἰδὼς,  
οἴα τυχῶν οἶου πρὸς σέθεν οἶος ἔχω·  
οὐκοτε σοῖς, γέρον, ὅμμα φίλοις φίλον ὅμμασι τέρψω,  
σῆς, γέρον, ἄψαμενος, φίλτατε, δεξιτερᾶς.  
ἡ ψαφαρὰ κόνις, ἡ ψαφαρὸς βιός ἔστι τί τούτων  
μείνειν ἐφημερίων; οὐ κόνις ἀλλὰ βίος.  
ἀλλά μοι ἡδύτερός γε πέλεις πολὺ τῶν ἔτ' ἔδυτων,  
ἔπλεο γάρ· σολ μὴν ταῦτα θαυμάντι φέρω,  
παῦρα μὲν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κῆρος ἐτήτυμα· μηδ' ἀποτρεφθῆς,  
πρὸς δὲ βαλῶν ἔτι νῦν ἡσυχον ὅμμα δέχου.  
οὐ γάρ ἔχω, μέγα δὴ τι θέλων, σέθεν ἔξια δοῦναι,  
θαπτομένου περ ἀπών· οὐ γάρ ἔνεστιν ἔμοι  
οὐδὲ μελικρήτου παρέχειν γάνον· εἰ γάρ ἔνειη  
καὶ σε χεροῦν ψαύσαι καὶ σέ ποτ' αὐθίς ιθεῖν,  
δάκρυσί τε σκουδᾶς τε κάρα φίλουν ἀμφιπολεύειν  
οὐθαλμούς θ' ιεροὺς σοὺς ιερόν τε δέμας.  
εἴθ' ὅφελον· μάλα γάρ τάδ' ἀν ἀμπαύσειε μερίμνης·  
νῦν δὲ πρόσωθεν ἄνευ σήματος οἰκτον ἔγω·  
οὐδ' ἐπιτυμβίδιον θρηνῶ μέλος, ἀλλ' ἀπαμυνθεῖς,  
ἀλλ' απάνευθεν ἔχων ἀμφιδακρυτὰ πάθη.  
ἀλλὰ σὺ χαῖρε θανῶν, καὶ ἔχων γέρας ζοθι πρὸς ἀνδρῶν  
πρός τε θεῶν, ἐνέροις εἴ τις ἔκεστι θεός.  
χαῖρε γέρον, φίλε χαῖρε πατέρ, πολὺ φέρτατ' ἀοιδῶν  
ῶν ιδομεν, πολὺ δὴ φέρτατ' ἀεισθομένων·  
χαῖρε, καὶ ὅλθον ἔχοις, οἶόν γε θαυμάντες ἔχουσιν,  
ἡσυχίαν ἔχθρας καὶ φιλότητος ἄτερ.

μήματος οίχομένου σοι μνήματ' ἐσ οὔτερον ἔσται,  
σοὶ τε φιλὴ μνήμη μνήματος οίχομένου·  
θν Χάριτες κλαίουσι θεαὶ, κλαίει δ' Ἀφροδίτη  
καλλιχόροις Μουσῶν τερψαμένη στεφάνοις.  
οὐ γάρ ἀπαξ ἱερούς ποτε γῆρας ἔτριψεν ἀνιδούς·  
τήνδε τὸ σὸν φαίνει μνῆμα τοῦ ἀγλαίνει.  
ἡ φίλος ἡς μακάρεσσι βροτὸς, σοὶ δὲ εἴ τινι Νύμφαι  
δῶρα ποθεινὰ νέμειν, οὔτετα δῶρ', ἔδοσαν.  
τὰς νῦν χάλκεος ὑπνος ἔβη καὶ ἀνήνεμος αἰών,  
καὶ συνθαπτομέναι μοῖραν ἔχουσι μίαν.  
εῦδεις καὶ σὺ, καλὸν καὶ ἀγάκλυτον ἐν χθονὶ κοίλη  
ὑπνον ἐφικόμενος, σῆς ἀπόνοσφι πάτρας,  
τῆλε παρὰ ξανθοῦ Τυρσηνικὸν οἶδμα καθεύδεις  
νάμαρος, ἡ δὲ ἔτι σὴ μαῖά σε γαῖα ποθεῖ,  
ἀλλ' ἀπέχεις, καὶ πρόσθε φιλόπτολις ὃν περ ἀπεῖπας·  
εῦδε· μάκαρ δὲ ἡμῖν οὐδὲ ἀμέγαρτος ἔσει.  
βαιὸς ἐπιχθονίων γε χρόνος καὶ μοῖρα κρατήσει,  
τοὺς δέ ποτ' εὐφροσύνη τοὺς δέ ποτ' ἄλγος ἔχει  
πολλάκι δὲ ἡ βλάπτει φάος ἡ σκότος ἀμφικαλύπτει  
μυρομένους, δάκνει δὲ ὑπνος ἐγρηγορότας·  
οὐδὲ ἔθ' θτ' ἐν τύμβοισι κατέδραθεν ὅμμα θαυμάτων  
ἡ σκότος ἡ τι φάος δῆξεται ἡελίου·  
οὐδὲ δυναρ ἐννύχιον καὶ ἐνύπνιον οὐδὲ ὑπαρ ἔσται  
ἡ ποτε τερπομένοις ἡ ποτ' δδυρομένοις·  
ἀλλ' ἔνα πάντες ἀεὶ θάκον συνέχουσι καὶ ἔδραν  
ἀντὶ βροτῆς ἀβροτον, κάλλιστον ἄντι κακῆς.

## THE ARGUMENT

ALTHAEA, daughter of Thestius and Eurythemis, queen of Calydon, being with child of Meleager her first-born son, dreamed that she brought forth a brand burning ; and upon his birth came the three Fates and prophesied of him three things, namely these ; that he should have great strength of his hands, and good fortune in this life, and that he should live no longer when the brand then in the fire were consumed : wherefore his mother plucked it forth and kept it by her. And the child being a man grown sailed with Jason after the fleece of gold, and won himself great praise of all men living ; and when the tribes of the north and west made war upon Ætolia, he fought against their army and scattered it. But Artemis, having at the first stirred up these tribes to war against Æneus king of Calydon, because he had offered sacrifice to all the gods saving her alone, but her he had forgotten to honour, was yet more wroth because of the destruction of this army, and sent upon the land of Calydon a wild boar which slew many and wasted all their increase, but him could none slay, and many went against him and perished. Then were all the chief men of Greece gathered together, and among them Atalanta daughter of Iasius the Arcadian, a virgin ; for whose sake Artemis let slay the boar, seeing she favoured the

## THE ARGUMENT

maiden greatly ; and Meleager having despatched it gave the spoil thereof to Atalanta, as one beyond measure enamoured of her ; but the brethren of Althæa his mother, Toxeus and Plexippus, with such others as disliked that she only should bear off the praise whereas many had borne the labour, laid wait for her to take away her spoil ; but Meleager fought against them and slew them : whom when Althæa their sister beheld and knew to be slain of her son, she waxed for wrath and sorrow like as one mad, and taking the brand whereby the measure of her son's life was meted to him, she cast it upon a fire ; and with the wasting thereof his life likewise wasted away, that being brought back to his father's house he died in a brief space ; and his mother also endured not long after for very sorrow ; and this was his end, and the end of that hunting.

## THE PERSONS

CHIEF HUNTSMAN  
CHORUS  
ALTHÆA  
MELEAGER  
ŒNEUS  
ATALANTA  
TOXEUS  
PLEXIPPUS  
HERALD  
MESSENGER  
SECOND MESSENGER

Ιστω δ' ὅστις οὐχ ὑπόπτεροι  
φροντίσιν δαεὶς,  
τὰν ἀ παιδολύμας τάλαινα Θεστιὰς μησαττ  
πυρδαῆ τινα πρόνοιαν,  
καταίθουσα παιδὸς δαφοινὸν  
δαλὸν ἥλικ', ἐπεὶ μολὰν  
ματρόθεν κελάδησε;  
σύμμετρόν τε διὰλ βίου  
ιαιρόκραυτον ἐσ ἀμαρ.

ÆSCH. Cho. 602-612.

## ATALANTA IN CALYDON

## CHIEF HUNTSMAN

MAIDEN, and mistress of the months and stars  
 Now folded in the flowerless fields of heaven,  
 Goddess whom all gods love with threefold heart,  
 Being treble in thy divided deity,  
 A light for dead men and dark hours, a foot  
 Swift on the hills as morning, and a hand  
 To all things fierce and fleet that roar and range  
 Mortal, with gentler shafts than snow or sleep ;  
 Hear now and help and lift no violent hand,  
 But favourable and fair as thine eye's beam  
 Hidden and shown in heaven ; for I all night  
 Amid the king's hounds and the hunting men  
 Have wrought and worshipped toward thee ; nor  
 shall man  
 See goodlier hounds or deadlier edge of spears ;  
 But for the end, that lies unreached at yet  
 Between the hands and on the knees of gods.  
 O fair-faced sun, killing the stars and dews  
 And dreams and desolation of the night !  
 Rise up, shine, stretch thine hand out, with thy bow  
 Touch the most dimmest height of trembling heaven,  
 And burn and break the dark about thy ways,  
 Shot through and through with arrows ; let thine hair  
 Lighten as flame above that flameless shell  
 Which was the moon, and thine eyes fill the world

And thy lips kindle with swift beams ; let earth  
Laugh, and the long sea fiery from thy feet  
Through all the roar and ripple of streaming springs  
And foam in reddening flakes and flying flowers  
Shaken from hands and blown from lips of nymphs  
Whose hair or breast divides the wandering wave  
With salt close tresses cleaving lock to lock,  
All gold, or shuddering and unfurrowed snow ;  
And all the winds about thee with their wings,  
And fountain-heads of all the watered world ;  
Each horn of Achelous, and the green  
Euenus, wedded with the straitening sea.  
For in fair time thou comest ; come also thou,  
Twin-born with him, and virgin, Artemis,  
And give our spears their spoil, the wild boar's hide,  
Sent in thine anger against us for sin done  
And bloodless altars without wine or fire.  
Him now consume thou ; for thy sacrifice  
With sanguine-shining steam divides the dawn,  
And one, the maiden rose of all thy maids,  
Arcadian Atalanta, snowy-souled,  
Fair as the snow and footed as the wind,  
From Ladon and well-wooded Mænalus  
Over the firm hills and the fleeting sea  
Hast thou drawn hither, and many an armèd king,  
Heroes, the crown of men, like gods in fight.  
Moreover out of all the Ætolian land,  
From the full-flowered Lelantian pasturage  
To what of fruitful field the son of Zeus  
Won from the roaring river and labouring sea  
When the wild god shrank in his horn and fled,  
And foamed and lessened through his wrathful ~~fords~~,  
Leaving clear lands that steamed with sudden sun,  
These virgins with the lightening of the day

Bring thee fresh wreaths and their own sweeter hair,  
Luxurious locks and flower-like mixed with flowers,  
Clean offering, and chaste hymns ; but me the time  
Divides from these things ; whom do thou not less  
Help and give honour, and to mine hounds good speed,  
And edge to spears, and luck to each man's hand.

## CHORUS

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain ;  
And the brown bright nightingale amorous  
Is half assuaged for Itylus,  
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,  
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,  
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,  
With a noise of winds and many rivers,  
With a clamour of waters, and with might ;  
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,  
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet ;  
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,  
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,  
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling ?  
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,  
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring !  
For the stars and the winds are unto her  
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player ;  
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,  
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,  
And all the season of snows and sins ;  
The days dividing lover and lover,  
The light that loses, the night that wins ;  
And time remembered is grief forgotten,  
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,  
And in green underwood and cover  
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,  
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,  
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes  
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit ;  
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,  
And the oat is heard above the lyre,  
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes  
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,  
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,  
Follows with dancing and fills with delight  
The Mænad and the Bassarid ;  
And soft as lips that laugh and hide  
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,  
And screen from seeing and leave in sight  
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair  
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes ;  
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare  
Her bright breast shortening into sighs ;  
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,  
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves  
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare  
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

## ALTHÆA

What do ye singing ? what is this ye sing ?

## CHORUS

Flowers bring we, and pure lips that please the gods,  
And raiment meet for service : lest the day  
Turn sharp with all its honey in our lips.

## ALTHÆA

Night, a black hound, follows the white fawn day,  
Swifter than dreams the white flown feet of sleep ;  
Will ye pray back the night with any prayers ?  
And though the spring put back a little while  
Winter, and snows that plague all men for sin,  
And the iron time of cursing, yet I know  
Spring shall be ruined with the rain, and storm  
Eat up like fire the ashen autumn days.  
I marvel what men do with prayers awake  
Who dream and die with dreaming ; any god,  
Yea the least god of all things called divine,  
Is more than sleep and waking ; yet we say,  
Perchance by praying a man shall match his god.  
For if sleep have no mercy, and man's dreams  
Bite to the blood and burn into the bone,  
What shall this man do waking ? By the gods,  
He shall not pray to dream sweet things to-night,  
Having dreamt once more bitter things than death.

## CHORUS

Queen, but what is it that hath burnt thine heart ?  
For thy speech flickers like a blown-out flame.

ALTHÆA

Look, ye say well, and know not what ye say ;  
For all my sleep is turned into a fire,  
And all my dreams to stuff that kindles it.

CHORUS

Yet one doth well being patient of the gods.

ALTHÆA

Yea, lest they smite us with some four-foot plague.

CHORUS

But when time spreads find out some herb for it.

ALTHÆA

And with their healing herbs infect our blood.

CHORUS

What ails thee to be jealous of their ways ?

ALTHÆA

What if they give us poisonous drinks for wine ?

CHORUS

They have their will ; much talking mends it not.

ALTHÆA

And gall for milk, and cursing for a prayer ?

CHORUS

Have they not given life, and the end of life ?

## ALTHÆA

Lo, where they heal, they help not ; thus they do,  
 They mock us with a little piteousness,  
 And we say prayers, and weep ; but at the last,  
 Sparing awhile, they smite and spare no whit.

## CHORUS

Small praise man gets dispraising the high gods :  
 What have they done that thou dishonourest them ?

## ALTHÆA

First Artemis for all this harried land  
 I praise not, and for wasting of the boar  
 That mars with tooth and tusk and fiery feet  
 Green pasturage and the grace of standing corn  
 And meadow and marsh with springs and unblown  
 leaves,  
 Flocks and swift herds and all that bite sweet grass,  
 I praise her not ; what things are these to praise ?

## CHORUS

But when the king did sacrifice, and gave  
 Each god fair dues of wheat and blood and wine,  
 Her not with bloodshed nor burnt-offering  
 Revered he, nor with salt or cloven cake ;  
 Wherefore being wroth she plagued the land ; but  
 now  
 Takes off from us fate and her heavy things.  
 Which deed of these twain were not good to praise ?  
 For a just deed looks always either way  
 With blameless eyes, and mercy is no fault.

ALTHÆA

Yea, but a curse she hath sent above all these  
 To hurt us where she healed us ; and hath lit  
 Fire where the old fire went out, and where the wind  
 Slackened, hath blown on us with deadlier air.

CHORUS

What storm is this that tightens all our sail ?

ALTHÆA

Love, a thwart sea-wind full of rain and foam.

CHORUS

Whence blown, and born under what stormier star ?

ALTHÆA

Southward across Euenus from the sea.

CHORUS

Thy speech turns toward Arcadia like blown wind.

ALTHÆA

Sharp as the north sets when the snows are out.

CHORUS

Nay, for this maiden hath no touch of love.

ALTHÆA

I would she had sought in some cold gulf of sea  
 Love, or in dens where strange beasts lurk, or fire,  
 Or snows on the extreme hills, or iron land  
 Where no spring is ; I would she had sought therein  
 And found, or ever love had found her here.

## CHORUS

She is holier than all holy days or things,  
The sprinkled water or fume of perfect fire ;  
Chaste, dedicated to pure prayers, and filled  
With higher thoughts than heaven ; a maiden clean,  
Pure iron, fashioned for a sword ; and man  
She loves not ; what should one such do with love ?

## ALTHÆA

Look you, I speak not as one light of wit,  
But as a queen speaks, being heart-vexed ; for oft  
I hear my brothers wrangling in mid hall,  
And am not moved ; and my son chiding them,  
And these things nowise move me, but I know  
Foolish and wise men must be to the end,  
And feed myself with patience ; but this most,  
This moves me, that for wise men as for fools  
Love is one thing, an evil thing, and turns  
Choice words and wisdom into fire and air.  
And in the end shall no joy come, but grief,  
Sharp words and soul's division and fresh tears  
Flower-wise upon the old root of tears brought forth,  
Fruit-wise upon the old flower of tears sprung up,  
Pitiful sighs, and much regrafted pain.  
These things are in my presage, and myself  
Am part of them and know not ; but in dreams  
The gods are heavy on me, and all the fates  
Shed fire across my eyelids mixed with night,  
And burn me blind, and disilluminate  
My sense of seeing, and my perspicuous soul  
Darken with vision ; seeing I see not, hear  
And hearing am not holpen, but mine eyes  
Stain many tender broiderries in the bed

Drawn up about my face that I may weep  
And the king wake not ; and my brows and lips  
Tremble and sob in sleeping, like swift flames  
That tremble, or water when it sobs with heat  
Kindled from under ; and my tears fill my breast  
And speck the fair dyed pillows round the king  
With barren showers and salter than the sea,  
Such dreams divide me dreaming ; for long since  
I dreamed that out of this my womb had sprung  
Fire and a firebrand ; this was ere my son,  
Meleager, a goodly flower in fields of fight,  
Felt the light touch him coming forth, and wailed  
Childlike ; but yet he was not ; and in time  
I bare him, and my heart was great ; for yet  
So royally was never strong man born,  
Nor queen so nobly bore as noble a thing  
As this my son was : such a birth God sent  
And such a grace to bear it. Then came in  
Three weaving women, and span each a thread,  
Saying This for strength and That for luck, and one  
Saying Till the brand upon the hearth burn down,  
So long shall this man see good days and live.  
And I with gathered raiment from the bed  
Sprang, and drew forth the brand, and cast on it  
Water, and trod the flame bare-foot, and crushed  
With naked hand spark beaten out of spark  
And blew against and quenched it ; for I said,  
These are the most high Fates that dwell with us,  
And we find favour a little in their sight,  
A little, and more we miss of, and much time  
Foils us ; howbeit they have pitied me, O son,  
And thee most piteous, thee a tenderer thing  
Than any flower of fleshly seed alive.  
Wherefore I kissed and hid him with my hands,  
And covered under arms and hair, and wept,

And feared to touch him with my tears, and laughed ;  
So light a thing was this man, grown so great  
Men cast their heads back, seeing against the sun  
Blaze the armed man carven on his shield, and hear  
The laughter of little bells along the brace  
Ring, as birds singing or flutes blown, and watch,  
High up, the cloven shadow of either plume  
Divide the bright light of the brass, and make  
His helmet as a windy and wintering moon  
Seen through blown cloud and plume-like drift, when  
ships

Drive, and men strive with all the sea, and oars  
Break, and the beaks dip under, drinking death ;  
Yet was he then but a span long, and moaned  
With inarticulate mouth inseparate words,  
And with blind lips and fingers wrung my breast  
Hard, and thrust out with foolish hands and feet,  
Murmuring ; but those grey women with bound hair  
Who fright the gods frightened not him ; he laughed  
Seeing them, and pushed out hands to feel and haul  
Distaff and thread, intangible ; but they  
Passed, and I hid the brand, and in my heart  
Laughed likewise, having all my will of heaven.  
But now I know not if to left or right  
The gods have drawn us hither ; for again  
I dreamt, and saw the black brand burst on fire  
As a branch bursts in flower, and saw the flame  
Fade flower-wise, and Death came and with dry lips  
Blew the charred ash into my breast ; and Love  
Trampled the ember and crushed it with swift feet.  
This I have also at heart ; that not for me,  
Not for me only or son of mine, O girls,  
The gods have wrought life, and desire of life,  
Heart's love and heart's division ; but for all

There shines one sun and one wind blows till night.  
 And when night comes the wind sinks and the sun,  
 And there is no light after, and no storm,  
 But sleep and much forgetfulness of things.  
 In such wise I gat knowledge of the gods  
 Years hence, and heard high sayings of one most wise,  
 Eurythemis my mother, who beheld  
 With eyes alive and spake with lips of these  
 As one on earth disfleshed and disallied  
 From breath or blood corruptible ; such gifts  
 Time gave her, and an equal soul to these  
 And equal face to all things ; thus she said.  
 But whatsoever intolerable or glad  
 The swift hours weave and unweave, I go hence  
 Full of mine own soul, perfect of myself,  
 Toward mine and me sufficient ; and what chance  
 The gods cast lots for and shake out on us,  
 That shall we take, and that much bear withal.  
 And now, before these gather to the hunt,  
 I will go arm my son and bring him forth,  
 Lest love or some man's anger work him harm.

## CHORUS

Before the beginning of years  
 There came to the making of man  
 Time, with a gift of tears ;  
 Grief, with a glass that ran ;  
 Pleasure, with pain for leaven ;  
 Summer, with flowers that fell ;  
 Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
 And madness risen from hell ;  
 Strength without hands to smite ;  
 Love that endures for a breath :  
 Night, the shadow of light,  
 And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand  
Fire, and the falling of tears,  
And a measure of sliding sand  
From under the feet of the years ;  
And froth and drift of the sea ;  
And dust of the labouring earth ;  
And bodies of things to be  
In the houses of death and of birth ;  
And wrought with weeping and laughter,  
And fashioned with loathing and love  
With life before and after  
And death beneath and above,  
For a day and a night and a morrow,  
That his strength might endure for a span  
With travail and heavy sorrow,  
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south  
They gathered as unto strife ;  
They breathed upon his mouth,  
They filled his body with life ;  
Eyesight and speech they wrought  
For the veils of the soul therein,  
A time for labour and thought,  
A time to serve and to sin ;  
They gave him light in his ways,  
And love, and a space for delight,  
And beauty and length of days,  
And night, and sleep in the night.  
His speech is a burning fire ;  
With his lips he travails ;  
In his heart is a blind desire,  
In his eyes foreknowledge of death ;

He weaves, and is clothed with derision ;  
 Sows, and he shall not reap ;  
 His life is a watch or a vision  
 Between a sleep and a sleep.

## MELEAGER

O sweet new heaven and air without a star,  
 Fair day, be fair and welcome, as to men  
 With deeds to do and praise to pluck from thee.  
 Come forth a child, born with clear sound and light,  
 With laughter and swift limbs and prosperous looks ;  
 That this great hunt with heroes for the hounds  
 May leave thee memorable and us well sped.

## ALTHÆA

Son, first I praise thy prayer, then bid thee speed ;  
 But the gods hear men's hands before their lips,  
 And heed beyond all crying and sacrifice  
 Light of things done and noise of labouring men.  
 But thou, being armed and perfect for the deed,  
 Abide ; for like rain-flakes in a wind they grow,  
 The men thy fellows, and the choice of the world,  
 Bound to root out the tuskèd plague, and leave  
 Thanks and safe days and peace in Calydon.

## MELEAGER

For the whole city and all the low-lying land  
 Flames, and the soft air sounds with them that come ;  
 The gods give all these fruit of all their works.

## ALTHÆA

Set thine eye thither and fix thy spirit and say  
 Whom there thou knowest ; for sharp mixed shadow  
 and wind

Blown up between the morning and the mist,  
 With steam of steeds and flash of bridle or wheel,  
 And fire, and parcels of the broken dawn,  
 And dust divided by hard light, and spears  
 That shine and shift as the edge of wild beasts' eyes,  
 Smite upon mine ; so fiery their blind edge  
 Burns, and bright points break up and baffle day.

## MELEAGER

The first, for many I know not, being far off,  
 Peleus the Larissæan, couched with whom  
 Sleeps the white sea-bred wife and silver-shod,  
 Fair as fled foam, a goddess ; and their son  
 Most swift and splendid of men's children born,  
 Most like a god, full of the future fame.

## ALTHÆA

Who are these shining like one sundered star ?

## MELEAGER

Thy sister's sons, a double flower of men.

## ALTHÆA

O sweetest kin to me in all the world,  
 O twin-born blood of Leda, gracious heads  
 Like kindled lights in untempestuous heaven,  
 Fair flower-like stars on the iron foam of fight,  
 With what glad heart and kindliness of soul,  
 Even to the staining of both eyes with tears  
 And kindling of warm eyelids with desire,  
 A great way off I greet you, and rejoice  
 Seeing you so fair, and moulded like as gods.  
 Far off ye come, and least in years of these,  
 But lordliest, but worth love to look upon.

## MELEAGER

Even such (for sailing hither I saw far hence,  
 And where Eurotas hollows his moist rock  
 Nigh Sparta with a strenuous-hearted stream)  
 Even such I saw their sisters ; one swan-white,  
 The little Helen, and less fair than she  
 Fair Clytaemnestra, grave as pasturing fawns  
 Who feed and fear some arrow ; but at whiles,  
 As one smitten with love or wrung with joy,  
 She laughs and lightens with her eyes, and then  
 Weeps ; whereat Helen, having laughed, weeps too,  
 And the other chides her, and she being chid speaks  
 nought,  
 But cheeks and lips and eyelids kisses her,  
 Laughing ; so fare they, as in their bloomless bud  
 And full of unblown life, the blood of gods.

## ALTHAEA

Sweet days befall them and good loves and lords,  
 And tender and temperate honours of the hearth,  
 Peace, and a perfect life and blameless bed.  
 But who shows next an eagle wrought in gold,  
 That flames and beats broad wings against the sun  
 And with void mouth gapes after emptier prey ?

## MELEAGER

Know by that sign the reign of Telamon  
 Between the fierce mouths of the encountering brine  
 On the strait reefs of twice-washed Salamis.

## ALTHAEA

For like one great of hand he bears himself,  
 Vine-chapleted, with savours of the sea,

Glittering as wine and moving as a wave.  
But who girt round there roughly follows him ?

## MELEAGER

Ancæus, great of hand, an iron bulk,  
Two-edged for fight as the axe against his arm,  
Who drives against the surge of stormy spears  
Full-sailed ; him Cepheus follows, his twin-born,  
Chief name next his of all Arcadian men.

## ALTHÆA

Praise be with men abroad ; chaste lives with us,  
Home-keeping days and household reverences.

## MELEAGER

Next by the left unsandalled foot know thou  
The sail and oar of this Ætolian land,  
Thy brethren, Toxeus and the violent-souled  
Plexippus, over-swift with hand and tongue ;  
For hands are fruitful, but the ignorant mouth  
Blows and corrupts their work with barren breath.

## ALTHÆA

Speech too bears fruit, being worthy ; and air blows  
down  
Things poisonous, and high-seated violences,  
And with charmed words and songs have men put  
out  
Wild evil, and the fire of tyrannies.

## MELEAGER

Yea, all things have they, save the gods and love.

## ALTHÆA

Love thou the law and cleave to things ordained.

MELEAGER

Law lives upon their lips whom these applaud.

ALTHÆA

How sayest thou these? what god applauds new things?

MELEAGER

Zeus, who hath fear and custom under foot.

ALTHÆA

But loves not laws thrown down and lives awry.

MELEAGER

Yet is not less himself than his own law.

ALTHÆA

Nor shifts and shuffles old things up and down.

MELEAGER

But what he will remoulds and discretes.

ALTHÆA

Much, but not this, that each thing live its life.

MELEAGER

Nor only live, but lighten and lift up higher.

ALTHÆA

Pride breaks itself, and too much gained is gone.

MELEAGER

Things gained are gone, but great things done endure.

## ALTHAEA

Child, if a man serve law through all his life  
 And with his whole heart worship, him all gods  
 Praise ; but who loves it only with his lips,  
 And not in heart and deed desiring it  
 Hides a perverse will with obsequious words,  
 Him heaven infatuates and his twin-born fate  
 Tracks, and gains on him, scenting sins far off,  
 And the swift hounds of violent death devour.  
 Be man at one with equal-minded gods,  
 So shall he prosper ; not through laws torn up,  
 Violated rule and a new face of things.  
 A woman armed makes war upon herself,  
 Unwomanlike, and treads down use and wont  
 And the sweet common honour that she hath,  
 Love, and the cry of children, and the hand  
 Trothplight and mutual mouth of marriages.  
 This doth she, being unloved ; whom if one love,  
 Not fire nor iron and the wide-mouthed wars  
 Are deadlier than her lips or braided hair.  
 For of the one comes poison, and a curse  
 Falls from the other and burns the lives of men.  
 But thou, son, be not filled with evil dreams,  
 Nor with desire of these things ; for with time  
 Blind love burns out ; but if one feed it full  
 Till some discolouring stain dyes all his life,  
 He shall keep nothing praiseworthy, nor die  
 The sweet wise death of old men honourable,  
 Who have lived out all the length of all their years  
 Blameless, and seen well-pleased the face of gods,  
 And without shame and without fear have wrought  
 Things memorable, and while their days held out  
 In sight of all men and the sun's great light

Have gat them glory and given of their own praise  
To the earth that bare them and the day that bred,  
Home friends and far-off hospitalities,  
And filled with gracious and memorial fame  
Lands loved of summer or washed by violent seas,  
Towns populous and many unfooted ways,  
And alien lips and native with their own.  
But when white age and venerable death  
Mow down the strength and life within their limbs,  
Drain out the blood and darken their clear eyes,  
Immortal honour is on them, having past  
Through splendid life and death desirable  
To the clear seat and remote throne of souls,  
Lands indiscernable in the unheard-of west,  
Round which the strong stream of a sacred sea  
Rolls without wind for ever, and the snow  
There shows not her white wings and windy feet,  
Nor thunder nor swift rain saith anything,  
Nor the sun burns, but all things rest and thrive ;  
And these, filled full of days, divine and dead,  
Sages and singers fiery from the god,  
And such as loved their land and all things good  
And, best beloved of best men, liberty,  
Free lives and lips, free hands of men free-born,  
And whatsoever on earth was honourable  
And whosoever of all the ephemeral seed,  
Live there a life no liker to the gods  
But nearer than their life of terrene days.  
Love thou such life and look for such a death.  
But from the light and fiery dreams of love  
Spring heavy sorrows and a sleepless life,  
Visions not dreams, whose lids no charm shall close  
Nor song assuage them waking ; and swift death  
Crushes with sterile feet the unripening ear,

Treads out the timeless vintage ; whom do thou  
Eschewing embrace the luck of this thy life,  
Not without honour ; and it shall bear to thee  
Such fruit as men reap from spent hours and wear,  
Few men, but happy ; of whom be thou, O son,  
Happiest, if thou submit thy soul to fate,  
And set thine eyes and heart on hopes high-born  
And divine deeds and abstinence divine.  
So shalt thou be toward all men all thy days  
As light and might communicable, and burn  
From heaven among the stars above the hours,  
And break not as a man breaks nor burn down :  
For to whom other of all heroic names  
Have the gods given his life in hand as thine ?  
And gloriously hast thou lived, and made thy life  
To me that bare thee and to all men born  
Thankworthy, a praise for ever ; and hast won fame  
When wild wars broke all round thy father's house,  
And the mad people of windy mountain ways  
Laid spears against us like a sea, and all  
Ætolia thundered with Thessalian hoofs ;  
Yet these, as wind baffles the foam, and beats  
Straight back the relaxed ripple, didst thou break  
And loosen all their lances, till undone  
And man from man they fell ; for ye twain stood  
God against god, Ares and Artemis,  
And thou the mightier ; wherefore she unleashed  
A sharp-toothed curse thou too shalt overcome ;  
For in the greener blossom of thy life  
Ere the full blade caught flower, and when time  
gave  
Respite, thou didst not slacken soul nor sleep,  
But with great hand and heart seek praise of men  
Out of sharp straits and many a grievous thing,

Seeing the strange foam of undivided seas  
 On channels never sailed in, and by shores  
 Where the old winds cease not blowing, and all the  
 night  
 Thunders, and day is no delight to men.

## CHORUS

Meleager, a noble wisdom and fair words  
 The gods have given this woman ; hear thou these.

## MELEAGER

O mother, I am not fain to strive in speech  
 Nor set my mouth against thee, who art wise  
 Even as they say and full of sacred words.  
 But one thing I know surely, and cleave to this ;  
 That though I be not subtle of wit as thou  
 Nor womanlike to weave sweet words, and melt  
 Mutable minds of wise men as with fire,  
 I too, doing justly and reverencing the gods,  
 Shall not want wit to see what things be right.  
 For whom they love and whom reject, being gods,  
 There is no man but seeth, and in good time  
 Submits himself, refraining all his heart.  
 And I too as thou sayest have seen great things ;  
 Seen otherwhere, but chiefly when the sail  
 First caught between stretched ropes the roaring  
 west,  
 And all our oars smote eastward, and the wind  
 First flung round faces of seafaring men  
 White splendid snow-flakes of the sundering foam,  
 And the first furrow in virginal green sea  
 Followed the plunging ploughshare of hewn pine,  
 And closed, as when deep sleep subdues man's breath  
 Lips close and heart subsides ; and closing, shone

Sunlike with many a Nereid's hair, and moved  
Round many a trembling mouth of doubtful gods,  
Risen out of sunless and sonorous gulfs  
Through waning water and into shallow light,  
That watched us ; and when flying the dove was  
snared

As with men's hands, but we shot after and sped  
Clear through the irremeable Symplegades ;  
And chiefliest when hoar beach and herbless cliff  
Stood out ahead from Colchis, and we heard  
Clefts hoarse with wind, and saw through narrowing  
reefs

The lightning of the intolerable wave  
Flash, and the white wet flame of breakers burn  
Far under a kindling south-wind, as a lamp  
Burns and bends all its blowing flame one way ;  
Wild heights untravelled of the wind, and vales  
Cloven seaward by their violent streams, and white  
With bitter flowers and bright salt scurf of brine ;  
Heard sweep their sharp swift gales, and bowing  
birdwise

Shriek with birds' voices, and with furious feet  
Tread loose the long skirts of a storm ; and saw  
The whole white Euxine clash together and fall  
Full-mouthed, and thunderous from a thousand  
throats :

Yet we drew thither and won the fleece and won  
Medea, deadlier than the sea ; but there  
Seeing many a wonder and fearful things to men  
I saw not one thing like this one seen here,  
Most fair and fearful, feminine, a god,  
Faultless ; whom I that love not, being unlike,  
Fear, and give honour, and choose from all the  
gods.

## CENEUS

Lady, the daughter of Thestius, and thou, son,  
 Not ignorant of your strife nor light of wit,  
 Scared with vain dreams and fluttering like spent  
 fire,

I come to judge between you, but a king  
 Full of past days and wise from years endured.  
 Nor thee I praise, who art fain to undo things done :  
 Nor thee, who art swift to esteem them overmuch.  
 For what the hours have given is given, and this  
 Changeless ; howbeit these change, and in good  
 time

Devise new things and good, not one thing still.  
 Us have they sent now at our need for help  
 Among men armed a woman, foreign born,  
 Virgin, not like the natural flower of things  
 That grows and bears and brings forth fruit and  
 dies ;  
 Unlovable, no light for a husband's house,  
 Espoused ; a glory among unwedded girls,  
 And chosen of gods who reverence maidenhood.  
 These too we honour in honouring her ; but thou,  
 Abstain thy feet from following, and thine eyes  
 From amorous touch ; nor set toward hers thine  
 heart,  
 Son, lest hate bear no deadlier fruit than love.

## ALTHAEA

O king, thou art wise, but wisdom halts ; and just,  
 But the gods love not justice more than fate,  
 And smite the righteous and the violent mouth,  
 And mix with insolent blood the reverent man's,  
 And bruise the holier as the lying lips.

Enough ; for wise words fail me, and my heart  
Takes fire and trembles flamewise, O my son,  
O child, for thine head's sake ; mine eyes wax thick,  
Turning toward thee, so goodly a weaponed man,  
So glorious ; and for love of thine own eyes  
They are darkened, and tears burn them, fierce as  
fire,  
And my lips pause and my soul sinks with love.  
But by thine hand, by thy sweet life and eyes,  
By thy great heart and these clasped knees, O son,  
I pray thee that thou slay me not with thee.  
For there was never a mother woman-born  
Loved her sons better ; and never a queen of men  
More perfect in her heart toward whom she loved.  
For what lies light on many and they forget,  
Small things and transitory as a wind o' the sea,  
I forget never ; I have seen thee all thine years  
A man in arms, strong and a joy to men  
Seeing thine head glitter and thine hand burn its way  
Through a heavy and iron furrow of sundering  
spears ;  
But always also a flower of three suns old,  
The small one thing that lying drew down my life  
To lie with thee and feed thee ; a child and weak,  
Mine, a delight to no man, sweet to me.  
Who then sought to thee ? who gat help ? who knew  
If thou wert goodly ? nay, no man at all.  
Or what sea saw thee, or sounded with thine oar,  
Child ? or what strange land shone with war through  
thee ?  
But fair for me thou wert, O little life,  
Fruitless, the fruit of mine own flesh, and blind,  
More than much gold, ungrown, a foolish flower.  
For silver nor bright snow nor feather of foam

Was whiter, and no gold yellower than thine hair,  
 O child, my child ; and now thou art lordlier grown,  
 Not lovelier, nor a new thing in mine eyes,  
 I charge thee by thy soul and this my breast,  
 Fear thou the gods and me and thine own heart,  
 Lest all these turn against thee ; for who knows  
 What wind upon what wave of altering time  
 Shall speak a storm and blow calamity ?  
 And there is nothing stabile in the world  
 But the gods break it ; yet not less, fair son,  
 If but one thing be stronger, if one endure,  
 Surely the bitter and the rooted love  
 That burns between us, going from me to thee,  
 Shall more endure than all things. What dost thou,  
 Following strange loves ? why wilt thou kill mine  
 heart ?

Lo, I talk wild and windy words, and fall  
 From my clear wits, and seem of mine own self  
 Dethroned, dispraised, disseated ; and my mind,  
 That was my crown, breaks, and mine heart is gone,  
 And I am naked of my soul, and stand  
 Ashamed, as a mean woman ; take thou thought :  
 Live if thou wilt, and if thou wilt not, look,  
 The gods have given thee life to lose or keep,  
 Thou shalt not die as men die, but thine end  
 Fallen upon thee shall break me unaware.

## MELEAGER

Queen, my whole heart is molten with thy tears,  
 And my limbs yearn with pity of thee, and love  
 Compels with grief mine eyes and labouring breath ;  
 For what thou art I know thee, and this thy breast  
 And thy fair eyes I worship, and am bound  
 Toward thee in spirit and love thee in all my soul.

For there is nothing terribler to men  
 Than the sweet face of mothers, and the might.  
 But what shall be let be ; for us the day  
 Once only lives a little, and is not found.  
 Time and the fruitful hour are more than we,  
 And these lay hold upon us ; but thou, God,  
 Zeus, the sole steersman of the helm of things,  
 Father, be swift to see us, and as thou wilt  
 Help : or if adverse, as thou wilt, refrain.

## CHORUS

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair ; thou art  
 goodly, O Love ;  
 Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a  
 dove.  
 Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the  
 sea ;  
 Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of  
 thee.  
 Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of  
 fire ;  
 Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of  
 desire ;  
 And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid ;  
 Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes  
 afraid ;  
 As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal  
 breath :  
 But Fate is the name of her ; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born  
 Of sea-foam and the frothing of blood,  
 Blood-red and bitter of fruit,  
 And the seed of it laughter and tears,

And the leaves of it madness and scorn ;  
 A bitter flower from the bud,  
 Sprung of the sea without root,  
 Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn  
 That is woven of the day on the night,  
 The hair of the hours was not white  
 Nor the raiment of time overworn,  
 When a wonder, a world's delight,  
 A perilous goddess was born ;  
 And the waves of the sea as she came  
 Clove, and the foam at her feet,  
 Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth  
 A fleshly blossom, a flame  
 Filling the heavens with heat  
 To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,  
 And men upon earth that hear  
 Sweet articulate words  
 Sweetly divided apart,  
 And in shallow and channel and mere  
 The rapid and footless herds,  
 Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,  
 She is fair, she is white like a dove,  
 And the life of the world in her breath  
 Breathes, and is born at her birth ;  
 For they knew thee for mother of love,  
 And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,  
Mother, when winds were at ease,  
As a flower of the springtime of corn,  
A flower of the foam of the seas ?  
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,  
Aphrodite, a mother of strife ;  
For before thee some rest was on earth,  
A little respite from tears,  
A little pleasure of life ;  
For life was not then as thou art,  
But as one that waxeth in years  
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife ;  
Earth had no thorn, and desire  
No sting, neither death any dart ;  
What hadst thou to do amongst these,  
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,  
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,  
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas  
As an ear from a seed of corn,  
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,  
As a ray shed forth of the morn,  
For division of soul and disease,  
For a dart and a sting and a thorn ?  
What ailed thee then to be born ?

Was there not evil enough,  
Mother, and anguish on earth  
Born with a man at his birth,  
Wastes underfoot, and above  
Storm out of heaven, and dearth  
Shaken down from the shining thereof,  
Wrecks from afar overseas  
And peril of shallow and firth,

And tears that spring and increase  
In the barren places of mirth,  
That thou, having wings as a dove,  
Being girt with desire for a girth,  
That thou must come after these,  
That thou must lay on him love ?

Thou shouldst not so have been born :  
But death should have risen with thee,  
Mother, and visible fear,  
Grief, and the wringing of hands,  
And noise of many that mourn ;  
The smitten bosom, the knee  
Bowed, and in each man's ear  
A cry as of perishing lands,  
A moan as of people in prison,  
A tumult of infinite griefs ;  
And thunder of storm on the sands,  
And wailing of wives on the shore ;  
And under thee newly arisen  
Loud shoals and shipwrecking reefs,  
Fierce air and violent light ;  
Sail rent and sundering oar,  
Darkness, and noises of night ;  
Clashing of streams in the sea,  
Wave against wave as a sword,  
Clamour of currents, and foam ;  
Rains making ruin on earth,  
Winds that wax ravenous and roam  
As wolves in a wolfish horde ;  
Fruits growing faint in the tree,  
And blind things dead in their birth ;  
Famine, and blighting of corn,  
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of ; but thee  
 Who shall discern or declare ?  
 In the uttermost ends of the sea  
 The light of thine eyelids and hair,  
 The light of thy bosom as fire  
 Between the wheel of the sun  
 And the flying flames of the air ?  
 Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity,  
 But abide with despair and desire  
 And the crying of armies undone,  
 Lamentation of one with another  
 And breaking of city by city ;  
 The dividing of friend against friend,  
 The severing of brother and brother ;  
 Wilt thou utterly bring to an end ?  
 Have mercy, mother !

For against all men from of old  
 Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,  
 And cast out gods from their places.  
 These things are spoken of thee.  
 Strong kings and goodly with gold  
 Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,  
 And made their kingdoms and races  
 As dust and surf of the sea.  
 All these, overburdened with woes  
 And with length of their days waxen weak,  
 Thou slewest ; and sentest moreover  
 Upon Tyro an evil thing,  
 Rent hair and a fetter and blows  
 Making bloody the flower of the cheek,  
 Though she lay by a god as a lover,  
 Though fair, and the seed of a king.

For of old, being full of thy fire,  
 She endured not longer to wear  
 On her bosom a saffron vest,  
 On her shoulder an ashwood quiver ;  
 Being mixed and made one through desire  
 With Enipeus, and all her hair  
 Made moist with his mouth, and her breast  
 Filled full of the foam of the river.

## ATALANTA

Sun, and clear light among green hills, and day  
 Late risen and long sought after, and you just gods  
 Whose hands divide anguish and recompense,  
 But first the sun's white sister, a maid in heaven,  
 On earth of all maids worshipped — hail, and hear,  
 And witness with me if not without sign sent,  
 Not without rule and reverence, I a maid  
 Hallowed, and huntress holy as whom I serve,  
 Here in your sight and eyeshot of these men  
 Stand, girt as they toward hunting, and my shafts  
 Drawn ; wherefore all ye stand up on my side,  
 If I be pure and all ye righteous gods,  
 Lest one revile me, a woman, yet no wife,  
 That bear a spear for spindle, and this bow strung  
 For a web woven ; and with pure lips salute  
 Heaven, and the face of all the gods, and dawn  
 Filling with maiden flames and maiden flowers  
 The starless fold o' the stars, and making sweet  
 The warm wan heights of the air, moon-trodden ways.  
 And breathless gates and extreme hills of heaven.  
 Whom, having offered water and bloodless gifts,  
 Flowers, and a golden circlet of pure hair,  
 Next Artemis I bid be favourable  
 And make this day all golden, hers and ours,

Gracious and good and white to the unblamed end.  
But thou, O well-beloved, of all my days  
Bid it be fruitful, and a crown for all,  
To bring forth leaves and bind round all my hair  
With perfect chaplets woven for thine of thee.  
For not without the word of thy chaste mouth,  
For not without law given and clean command,  
Across the white straits of the running sea  
From Elis even to the Acheloian horn,  
I with clear winds came hither and gentle gods,  
Far off my father's house, and left uncheered  
Iasius, and uncheered the Arcadian hills  
And all their green-haired waters, and all woods  
Disconsolate, to hear no horn of mine  
Blown, and behold no flash of swift white feet.

## MELEAGER

For thy name's sake and awe toward thy chaste head,  
O holiest Atalanta, no man dares  
Praise thee, though fairer than whom all men praise,  
And godlike for thy grace of hallowed hair  
And holy habit of thine eyes, and feet  
That make the blown foam neither swift nor white  
Though the wind winnow and whirl it ; yet we praise  
Gods, found because of thee adorable  
And for thy sake praiseworthiest from all men :  
Thee therefore we praise also, thee as these,  
Pure, and a light lit at the hands of gods.

## TOXEUS

How long will ye whet spears with eloquence,  
Fight, and kill beasts dry-handed with sweet words ?  
Cease, or talk still and slay thy boars at home.

## PLEXIPPUS

Why, if she ride among us for a man,  
 Sit thou for her and spin ; a man grown girl  
 Is worth a woman weaponed ; sit thou here.

## MELEAGER

Peace, and be wise ; no gods love idle speech.

## PLEXIPPUS

Nor any man a man's mouth woman-tongued.

## MELEAGER

For my lips bite not sharper than mine hands.

## PLEXIPPUS

Nay, both bite soft, but no whit softly mine.

## MELEAGER

Keep thine hands clean ; they have time enough to  
 stain.

## PLEXIPPUS

For thine shall rest and wax not red to-day.

## MELEAGER

Have all thy will of words ; talk out thine heart.

ALTHÆA<sup>1</sup>

Refrain your lips, O brethren, and my son,  
 Lest words turn snakes and bite you uttering them.

## TOXEUS

Except she give her blood before the gods,  
 What profit shall a maid be among men ?

## PLEXIPPUS

Let her come crowned and stretch her throat for a knife,  
Bleat out her spirit and die, and so shall men  
Through her too prosper and through prosperous gods,  
But nowise through her living ; shall she live  
A flower-bud of the flower-bed, or sweet fruit  
For kisses and the honey-making mouth,  
And play the shield for strong men and the spear ?  
Then shall the heifer and her mate lock horns,  
And the bride overbear the groom, and men  
Gods ; for no less division sunders these ;  
Since all things made are seasonable in time,  
But if one alter unseasonable are all.  
But thou, O Zeus, hear me that I may slay  
This beast before thee and no man halve with me  
Nor woman, lest these mock thee, though a god,  
Who hast made men strong, and thou being wise be held  
Foolish ; for wise is that thing which endures.

## ATALANTA

Men, and the chosen of all this people, and thou, King, I beseech you a little bear with me.  
For if my life be shameful that I live,  
Let the gods witness and their wrath ; but these  
Cast no such word against me. Thou, O mine, O holy, O happy goddess, if I sin .  
Changing the words of women and the works  
For spears and strange men's faces, hast not thou  
One shaft of all thy sudden seven that pierced  
Seven through the bosom or shining throat or side,

All couched about one mother's loosening knees,  
All holy born, engraffed of Tantalus ?  
But if toward any of you I am overbold  
That take thus much upon me, let him think  
How I, for all my forest holiness,  
Fame, and this armed and iron maidenhood,  
Pay thus much also ; I shall have no man's love  
For ever, and no face of children born  
Or feeding lips upon me or fastening eyes  
For ever, nor being dead shall kings my sons  
Mourn me and bury, and tears on daughters' cheeks  
Burn ; but a cold and sacred life, but strange,  
But far from dances and the back-blowing torch,  
Far off from flowers or any bed of man,  
Shall my life be for ever : me the snows  
That face the first o' the morning, and cold hills  
Full of the land-wind and sea-travelling storms  
And many a wandering wing of noisy nights  
That know the thunder and hear the thickening  
wolves—

Me the utmost pine and footless frost of woods  
That talk with many winds and gods, the hours  
Re-risen, and white divisions of the dawn,  
Springs thousand-tongued with the intermitting reed  
And streams that murmur of the mother snow—  
Me these allure, and know me ; but no man  
Knows, and my goddess only. Lo now, see  
If one of all you these things vex at all.  
Would God that any of you had all the praise  
And I no manner of memory when I die,  
So might I show before her perfect eyes  
Pure, whom I follow, a maiden to my death.  
But for the rest let all have all they will ;  
For is it a grief to you that I have part,

Being woman merely, in your male might and deeds  
Done by main strength ? yet in my body is throned  
As great a heart, and in my spirit, O men,  
I have not less of godlike. Evil it were  
That one a coward should mix with you, one hand  
Fearful, one eye abase itself ; and these  
Well might ye hate and well revile, not me.  
For not the difference of the several flesh  
Being vile or noble or beautiful or base  
Makes praiseworthy, but purer spirit and heart  
Higher than these meaner mouths and limbs, that  
feed,  
Rise, rest, and are and are not ; and for me.  
What should I say ? but by the gods of the world  
And this my maiden body, by all oaths  
That bind the tongue of men and the evil will,  
I am not mighty-minded, nor desire  
Crowns, nor the spoil of slain things nor the fame ;  
Feed ye on these, eat and wax fat ; cry out,  
Laugh, having eaten, and leap without a lyre,  
Sing, mix the wind with clamour, smite and shake  
Sonorous timbrels and tumultuous hair,  
And fill the dance up with tempestuous feet,  
For I will none ; but having prayed my prayers  
And made thank-offering for prosperities,  
I shall go hence and no man see me more.  
What thing is this for you to shout me down,  
What, for a man to grudge me this my life  
As it were envious of all yours, and I  
A thief of reputations ? nay, for now,  
If there be any highest in heaven, a god  
Above all thrones and thunders of the gods  
Throned, and the wheel of the world roll under him,  
Judge he between me and all of you, and see

If I transgress at all : but ye, refrain  
 Transgressing hands and reinless mouths, and keep  
 Silence, lest by much foam of violent words  
 And proper poison of your lips ye die.

## CENEUS

O flower of Tegea, maiden, fleetest foot  
 And holiest head of women, have good cheer  
 Of thy good words : but ye, depart with her  
 In peace and reverence, each with blameless eye  
 Following his fate ; exalt your hands and hearts,  
 Strike, cease not, arrow on arrow and wound on  
 wound,  
 And go with gods and with the gods return.

## CHORUS

Who hath given man speech ? or who hath set  
 therein  
 A thorn for peril and a snare for sin ?  
 For in the word his life is and his breath,  
 And in the word his death,  
 That madness and the infatuate heart may breed  
 From the word's womb the deed  
 And life bring one thing forth ere all pass by,  
 Even one thing which is ours yet cannot die—  
 Death. Hast thou seen him ever anywhere,  
 Time's twin-born brother, imperishable as he  
 Is perishable and plaintive, clothed with care  
 And mutable as sand,  
 But death is strong and full of blood and fair  
 And perdurable and like a lord of land ?  
 Nay, time thou seest not, death thou wilt not see  
 Till life's right hand be loosened from thine hand  
 And thy life-days from thee.

For the gods very subtly fashion  
    Madness with sadness upon earth :  
Not knowing in any wise compassion,  
    Nor holding pity of any worth ;  
And many things they have given and taken,  
    And wrought and ruined many things ;  
The firm land have they loosed and shaken,  
    And sealed the sea with all her springs ;  
They have wearied time with heavy burdens  
    And vexed the lips of life with breath :  
Set men to labour and given them gurdons,  
    Death, and great darkness after death :  
Put moans into the bridal measure  
    And on the bridal wools a stain ;  
And circled pain about with pleasure,  
    And girdled pleasure about with pain ;  
And strewed one marriage-bed with tears and fire  
    For extreme loathing and supreme desire.

What shall be done with all these tears of ours ?  
    Shall they make watersprings in the fair heaven  
To bathe the brows of morning ? or like flowers  
    Be shed and shine before the starriest hours,  
    Or made the raiment of the weeping Seven ?  
Or rather, O our masters, shall they be  
    Food for the famine of the grievous sea,  
    A great well-head of lamentation  
Satiating the sad gods ? or fall and flow  
    Among the years and seasons to and fro,  
    And wash their feet with tribulation  
And fill them full with grieving ere they go ?  
    Alas, our lords, and yet alas again,  
Seeing all your iron heaven is gilt as gold  
    But all we smite thereat in vain ;

Smite the gates barred with groanings manifold,

    But all the floors are paven with our pain.

Yea, and with weariness of lips and eyes,

With breaking of the bosom, and with sighs,

    We labour, and are clad and fed with grief

And filled with days we would not fain behold

And nights we would not hear of ; we wax old,

    All we wax old and wither like a leaf.

We are outcast, strayed between bright sun and  
    moon ;

Our light and darkness are as leaves of flowers,

Black flowers and white, that perish ; and the noon  
    As midnight, and the night as daylight hours.

A little fruit a little while is ours,

    And the worm finds it soon.

But up in heaven the high gods one by one

    Lay hands upon the draught that quickeneth,  
Fulfilled with all tears shed and all things done.

    And stir with soft imperishable breath

    The bubbling bitterness of life and death,  
And hold it to our lips and laugh ; but they

    Preserve their lips from tasting night or day,

    Lest they too change and sleep, the fates that spun,  
The lips that made us and the hands that slay ;

    Lest all these change, and heaven bow down to  
    none,

Change and be subject to the secular sway

    And terrene revolution of the sun.

Therefore they thrust it from them, putting time away.

I would the wine of time, made sharp and sweet

    With multitudinous days and nights and tears

    And many mixing savours of strange years,

Were no more trodden of them under feet,  
Cast out and spilt about their holy places :  
That life were given them as a fruit to eat  
And death to drink as water ; that the light  
Might ebb, drawn backward from their eyes, and night  
    Hide for one hour the imperishable faces.  
That they might rise up sad in heaven, and know  
Sorrow and sleep, one paler than young snow,  
    One cold as blight of dew and ruinous rain ;  
Rise up and rest and suffer a little, and be  
Awhile as all things born with us and we,  
    And grieve as men, and like slain men be slain.

For now we know not of them ; but one saith  
    The gods are gracious, praising God ; and one,  
When hast thou seen ? or hast thou felt his breath  
    Touch, nor consume thine eyelids as the sun,  
Nor fill thee to the lips with fiery death ?  
    None hath beheld him, none  
Seen above other gods and shapes of things,  
Swift without feet and flying without wings,  
Intolerable, not clad with death or life,  
    Insatiable, not known of night or day,  
The lord of love and loathing and of strife  
    Who gives a star and takes a sun away ;  
Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife  
    To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay ;  
Who turns the large limbs to a little flame  
    And binds the great sea with a little sand ;  
Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame ;  
    Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand ;  
Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,  
    Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,  
Smites without sword, and scourges without rod ;  
    The supreme evil, God.

Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us,  
One saith, and hidden our eyes away from sight,  
And made us transitory and hazardous,  
Light things and slight ;  
Yet have men praised thee, saying, He hath made  
man thus,  
And he doeth right.  
Thou hast kissed us, and hast smitten ; thou hast  
laid  
Upon us with thy left hand life, and said,  
Live : and again thou hast said, Yield up your  
breath,  
And with thy right hand laid upon us death.  
Thou hast sent us sleep, and stricken sleep with  
dreams,  
Saying, Joy is not, but love of joy shall be ;  
Thou hast made sweet springs for all the pleasant  
streams,  
In the end thou hast made them bitter with the  
sea.  
Thou hast fed one rose with dust of many men ;  
Thou hast marred one face with fire of many tears ;  
Thou hast taken love, and given us sorrow again ;  
With pain thou hast filled us full to the eyes and  
ears.  
Therefore because thou art strong, our father, and  
we  
Feeble ; and thou art against us, and thine hand  
Constrains us in the shallows of the sea  
And breaks us at the limits of the land ;  
Because thou hast bent thy lightnings as a bow,  
And loosed the hours like arrows ; and let fall  
Sins and wild words and many a wingèd woe  
And wars among us, and one end of all ;

Because thou hast made the thunder, and thy feet  
 Are as a rushing water when the skies  
 Break, but thy face as an exceeding heat  
 And flames of fire the eyelids of thine eyes ;  
 Because thou art over all who are over us ;  
 Because thy name is life and our name death ;  
 Because thou art cruel and men are piteous,  
 And our hands labour and thine hand scattereth ;  
 Lo, with hearts rent and knees made tremulous,  
 Lo, with ephemeral lips and casual breath,  
 At least we witness of thee ere we die  
 That these things are not otherwise, but thus ;  
 That each man in his heart sigheth, and saith,  
 That all men even as I,  
 All we are against thee, against thee, O God most  
 high.

But ye, keep ye on earth  
 Your lips from over-speech,  
 Loud words and longing are so little worth ;  
 And the end is hard to reach.  
 For silence after grievous things is good,  
 And reverence, and the fear that makes men whole,  
 And shame, and righteous governance of blood,  
 And lordship of the soul.  
 But from sharp words and wits men pluck no fruit,  
 And gathering thorns they shake the tree at root ;  
 For words divide and rend ;  
 But silence is most noble till the end.

## ALTHÆA

I heard within the house a cry of news  
 And came forth eastward hither, where the dawn  
 Cheers first these warder gods that face the sun

And next our eyes unrisen ; for unaware  
 Came clashes of swift hoofs and trampling feet  
 And through the windy pillared corridor  
 Light sharper than the frequent flames of day  
 That daily fill it from the fiery dawn ;  
 Gleams, and a thunder of people that cried out,  
 And dust and hurrying horsemen ; lo their chief,  
 That rode with Æneus rein by rein, returned.  
 What cheer, O herald of my lord the king ?

HERALD

Lady, good cheer and great ; the boar is slain.

CHORUS

Praised be all gods that look toward Calydon.

ALTHAEA

Good news and brief ; but by whose happier hand ?

HERALD

A maiden's and a prophet's and thy son's.

ALTHAEA

Well fare the spear that severed him and life.

HERALD

Thine own, and not an alien, hast thou blest.

ALTHAEA

Twice be thou too for my sake blest and his.

HERALD

At the king's word I rode afoam for thine.

ALTHAEA

Thou sayest he tarrieth till they bring the spoil ?

## HERALD

Hard by the quarry, where they breathe, O queen.

## ALTHÆA

Speak thou their chance ; but some bring flowers and  
crown

These gods and all the lintel, and shed wine,  
Fetch sacrifice and slay ; for heaven is good.

## HERALD

Some furlongs northward where the brakes begin  
West of that narrowing range of warrior hills  
Whose brooks have bled with battle when thy son  
Smote Acarnania, there all they made halt,  
And with keen eye took note of spear and hound,  
Royally ranked ; Laertes island-born,  
The young Gerenian Nestor, Panopeus,  
And Cepheus and Ancæus, mightiest thewed,  
Arcadians ; next, and evil-eyed of these,  
Arcadian Atalanta, with twain hounds  
Lengthening the leash, and under nose and brow  
Glittering with lipless tooth and fire-swift eye ;  
But from her white braced shoulder the plumed shafts  
Rang, and the bow shone from her side ; next her  
Meleager, like a sun in spring that strikes  
Branch into leaf and bloom into the world,  
A glory among men meaner ; Iphicles,  
And following him that slew the biform bull  
Pirithous, and divine Eurytion,  
And, bride-bound to the gods, Æacides.  
Then Telamon his brother, and Argive-born  
The seer and sayer of visions and of truth,  
Amphiaraus ; and a four-fold strength,

Thine, even thy mother's and thy sister's sons.  
And recent from the roar of foreign foam  
Jason, and Dryas twin-begot with war,  
A blossom of bright battle, sword and man  
Shining ; and Idas, and the keenest eye  
Of Lynceus, and Admetus twice-espoused,  
And Hippasus and Hyleus, great in heart.  
These having halted bade blow horns, and rode  
Through woods and waste lands cleft by stormy  
streams,  
Past yew-trees and the heavy hair of pines,  
And where the dew is thickest under oaks,  
This way and that ; but questing up and down  
They saw no trail nor scented ; and one said,  
Plexippus, Help, or help not, Artemis,  
And we will flay thy boarskin with male hands ;  
But saying, he ceased and said not that he would,  
Seeing where the green ooze of a sun-struck marsh  
Shook with a thousand reeds untunable,  
And in their moist and multitudinous flower  
Slept no soft sleep, with violent visions fed,  
The blind bulk of the immeasurable beast.  
And seeing, he shuddered with sharp lust of praise  
Through all his limbs, and launched a double dart.  
And missed ; for much desire divided him,  
Too hot of spirit and feebler than his will,  
That his hand failed, though fervent ; and the shaft,  
Sundering the rushes, in a tamarisk stem  
Shook, and stuck fast ; then all abode save one,  
The Arcadian Atalanta ; from her side  
Sprang her hounds, labouring at the leash, and  
slipped,  
And plashed ear-deep with plunging feet ; but she  
Saying, Speed it as I send it for thy sake,

Goddess, drew bow and loosed ; the sudden string  
Rang, and sprang inward, and the waterish air  
Hissed, and the moist plumes of the songless reeds  
Moved as a wave which the wind moves no more.  
But the boar heaved half out of ooze and slime  
His tense flank trembling round the barbèd wound,  
Hateful ; and fiery with invasive eyes  
And bristling with intolerable hair  
Plunged, and the hounds clung, and green flowers  
and white  
Reddened and broke all round them where they  
came.  
And charging with sheer tusk he drove, and smote  
Hyleus ; and sharp death caught his sudden soul,  
And violent sleep shed night upon his eyes.  
Then Peleus, with strong strain of hand and heart,  
Shot ; but the sidelong arrow slid, and slew  
His comrade born and loving countryman,  
Under the left arm smitten, as he no less  
Poised a like arrow ; and bright blood brake afoam,  
And falling, and weighed back by clamorous arms,  
Sharp rang the dead limbs of Eurytion.  
Then one shot happier, the Cadmean seer,  
Amphiaraus ; for his sacred shaft  
Pierced the red circlet of one ravening eye  
Beneath the brute brows of the sanguine boar,  
Now bloodier from one slain ; but he so galled  
Sprang straight, and rearing cried no lesser cry  
Than thunder and the roar of wintering streams  
That mix their own foam with the yellower sea ;  
And as a tower that falls by fire in fight  
With ruin of walls and all its archery,  
And breaks the iron flower of war beneath,  
Crushing charred limbs and molten arms of men ;

So through crushed branches and the reddening  
brake

Clamoured and crashed the fervour of his feet,  
And trampled, springing sideways from the tusk,  
Too tardy a moving mould of heavy strength,  
Ancæus ; and as flakes of weak-winged snow  
Break, all the hard thews of his heaving limbs  
Broke, and rent flesh fell every way, and blood  
Flew, and fierce fragments of no more a man.  
Then all the heroes drew sharp breath, and gazed,  
And smote not ; but Meleager, but thy son,  
Right in the wild way of the coming curse  
Rock-rooted, fair with fierce and fastened lips,  
Clear eyes, and springing muscle and shortening  
limb—

With chin aslant indrawn to a tightening throat,  
Grave, and with gathered sinews, like a god,—  
Aimed on the left side his well-handled spear  
Grasped where the ash was knottiest hewn, and  
smote,

And with no missile wound, the monstrous boar  
Right in the hairiest hollow of his hide  
Under the last rib, sheer through bulk and bone,  
Deep in ; and deeply smitten, and to death,  
The heavy horror with his hanging shafts  
Leapt, and fell furiously, and from raging lips  
Foamed out the latest wrath of all his life.

And all they praised the gods with mightier heart,  
Zeus and all gods, but chiefliest Artemis,  
Seeing ; but Meleager bade whet knives and flay,  
Strip and stretch out the splendour of the spoil ;  
And hot and horrid from the work all these  
Sat, and drew breath and drank and made great  
cheer

And washed the hard sweat off their calmer brows.  
For much sweet grass grew higher than grew the reed,  
And good for slumber, and every holier herb,  
Narcissus, and the low-lying melilot,  
And all of goodliest blade and bloom that springs  
Where, hid by heavier hyacinth, violet buds  
Blossom and burn ; and fire of yellower flowers  
And light of crescent lilies, and such leaves  
As fear the Faun's and know the Dryad's foot ;  
Olive and ivy and poplar dedicate,  
And many a well-spring overwatched of these.  
There now they rest ; but me the king bade bear  
Good tidings to rejoice this town and thee.  
Wherefore be glad, and all ye give much thanks,  
For fallen is all the trouble of Calydon.

## ALTHAEA

Laud ye the gods ; for this they have given is good,  
And what shall be they hide until their time.  
Much good and somewhat grievous hast thou said,  
And either well ; but let all sad things be,  
Till all have made before the prosperous gods  
Burnt-offering, and poured out the floral wine.  
Look fair, O gods, and favourable ; for we  
Praise you with no false heart or flattering mouth,  
Being merciful, but with pure souls and prayer.

## HERALD

Thou hast prayed well ; for whoso fears not these,  
But once being prosperous waxes huge of heart,  
Him shall some new thing unaware destroy.

## CHORUS

O that I now, I too were  
By deep wells and water-floods,  
Streams of ancient hills, and where  
All the wan green places bear  
Blossoms cleaving to the sod,  
Fruitless fruit, and grasses fair,  
Or such darkest ivy-buds  
As divide thy yellow hair,  
Bacchus, and their leaves that nod  
Round thy fawnskin brush the bare  
Snow-soft shoulders of a god ;  
There the year is sweet, and there  
Earth is full of secret springs,  
And the fervent rose-cheeked hours,  
Those that marry dawn and noon,  
There are sunless, there look pale  
In dim leaves and hidden air,  
Pale as grass or latter flowers  
Or the wild vine's wan wet rings  
Full of dew beneath the moon,  
And all day the nightingale  
Sleeps, and all night sings ;  
There in cold remote recesses  
That nor alien eyes assail,  
Feet, nor imminence of wings,  
Nor a wind nor any tune,  
Thou, O queen and holiest,  
Flower the whitest of all things,  
With reluctant lengthening tresses  
And with sudden splendid breast  
Save of maidens un beholden,  
There art wont to enter, there

Thy divine swift limbs and golden  
Maiden growth of unbound hair,  
Bathed in waters white,  
Shine, and many a maid's by thee  
In moist woodland or the hilly  
Flowerless brakes where wells abound  
Out of all men's sight ;  
Or in lower pools that see  
All their marges clothed all round  
With the innumerable lily,  
Whence the golden-girdled bee  
Flits through flowering rush to fret  
White or duskier violet,  
Fair as those that in far years  
With their buds left luminous  
And their little leaves made wet,  
From the warmer dew of tears,  
Mother's tears in extreme need,  
Hid the limbs of Iamus,  
Of thy brother's seed ;  
For his heart was piteous  
Toward him, even as thine heart now  
Pitiful toward us ;  
Thine, O goddess, turning hither  
A benignant blameless brow ;  
Seeing enough of evil done  
And lives withered as leaves wither  
In the blasting of the sun ;  
Seeing enough of hunters dead,  
Ruin enough of all our year,  
Herds and harvests slain and shed,  
Herdsmen stricken many an one,  
Fruits and flocks consumed together,  
And great length of deadly days.

Yet with reverent lips and fear  
Turn we toward thee, turn and praise  
For this lightening of clear weather  
And prosperities begun.  
For not seldom, when all air  
As bright water without breath  
Shines, and when men fear not, fate  
Without thunder unaware  
Breaks, and brings down death.  
Joy with grief ye great gods give,  
Good with bad, and overbear  
All the pride of us that live,  
All the high estate,  
As ye long since overbore,  
As in old time long before,  
Many a strong man and a great,  
All that were.  
But do thou, sweet, otherwise,  
Having heed of all our prayer,  
Taking note of all our sighs ;  
We beseech thee by thy light,  
By thy bow, and thy sweet eyes,  
And the kingdom of the night,  
Be thou favourable and fair ;  
By thine arrows and thy might  
And Orion overthrown ;  
By the maiden thy delight,  
By the indissoluble zone  
And the sacred hair.

## MESSENGER

Maidens, if ye will sing now, shift your song,  
Bow down, cry, wail for pity ; is this a time  
For singing ? nay, for strewing of dust and ash,  
Rent raiment, and for bruising of the breast.

## CHORUS

What new thing wolf-like lurks behind thy words?  
What snake's tongue in thy lips? what fire in the  
eyes?

## MESSENGER

Bring me before the queen and I will speak.

## CHORUS

Lo, she comes forth as from thank-offering made.

## MESSENGER

A barren offering for a bitter gift.

## ALTHÆA

What are these borne on branches, and the face  
Covered? no mean men living, but now slain  
Such honour have they, if any dwell with death.

## MESSENGER

Queen, thy twain brethren and thy mother's sons.

## ALTHÆA

Lay down your dead till I behold their blood  
If it be mine indeed, and I will weep.

## MESSENGER

Weep if thou wilt, for these men shall no more.

## ALTHÆA

O brethren, O my father's sons, of me  
Well loved and well reputed, I should weep  
Tears dearer than the dear blood drawn from you  
But that I know you not uncomforted,  
Sleeping no shameful sleep, however slain,  
For my son surely hath avenged you dead.

MESSENGER

Nay, should thine own seed slay himself, O queen?

ALTHÆA

Thy double word brings forth a double death.

MESSENGER

Know this then singly, by one hand they fell.

ALTHÆA

What mutterest thou with thine ambiguous mouth?

MESSENGER

Slain by thy son's hand; is that saying so hard?

ALTHÆA

Our time is come upon us: it is here.

CHORUS

O miserable, and spoiled at thine own hand.

ALTHÆA

Wert thou not called Meleager from this womb?

CHORUS

A grievous huntsman hath it bred to thee.

ALTHÆA

Wert thou born fire, and shalt thou not devour?

CHORUS

The fire thou madest, will it consume even thee?

ALTHÆA

My dreams are fallen upon me; burn thou too.

## CHORUS

Not without God are visions born and die.

## ALTHÆA

The gods are many about me ; I am one.

## CHORUS

She groans as men wrestling with heavier gods.

## ALTHÆA

They rend me, they divide me, they destroy.

## CHORUS

Or one labouring in travail of strange births.

## ALTHÆA

They are strong, they are strong ; I am broken, and these prevail.

## CHORUS

The god is great against her ; she will die.

## ALTHÆA

Yea, but not now ; for my heart too is great.  
I would I were not here in sight of the sun.  
But thou, speak all thou sawest, and I will die.

## MESSENGER

O queen, for queenlike hast thou borne thyself,  
A little word may hold so great mischance.  
For in division of the sanguine spoil  
These men thy brethren wrangling bade yield up  
The boar's head and the horror of the hide  
That this might stand a wonder in Calydon,

Hallowed ; and some drew toward them ; but thy son  
With great hands grasping all that weight of hair  
Cast down the dead heap clanging and collapsed  
At female feet, saying This thy spoil not mine,  
Maiden, thine own hand for thyself hath reaped,  
And all this praise God gives thee : she thereat  
Laughed, as when dawn touches the sacred night  
The sky sees laugh and redden and divide  
Dim lips and eyelids virgin of the sun,  
Hers, and the warm slow breasts of morning heave,  
Fruitful, and flushed with flame from lamp-lit hours,  
And maiden undulation of clear hair  
Colour the clouds ; so laughed she from pure heart,  
Lit with a low blush to the braided hair,  
And rose-coloured and cold like very dawn,  
Golden and godlike, chastely with chaste lips,  
A faint grave laugh ; and all they held their peace,  
And she passed by them. Then one cried Lo now,  
Shall not the Arcadian shoot out lips at us,  
Saying all we were despoiled by this one girl ?  
And all they rode against her violently  
And cast the fresh crown from her hair, and now  
They had rent her spoil away, dishonouring her,  
Save that Meleager, as a tame lion chafed,  
Bore on them, broke them, and as fire cleaves wood  
So clove and drove them, smitten in twain ; but she  
Smote not nor heaved up hand ; and this man first,  
Plexippus, crying out This for love's sake, sweet,  
Drove at Meleager, who with spear straightening  
Pierced his cheek through ; then Toxeus made for  
him,  
Dumb, but his spear spake ; vain and violent words.  
Fruitless ; for him too stricken through both sides  
The earth felt falling, and his horse's foam

Blanched thy son's face, his slayer ; and these being slain,

None moved nor spake ; but Æneus bade bear hence These made of heaven infatuate in their deaths, Foolish ; for these would baffle fate, and fell. And they passed on, and all men honoured her, Being honourable, as one revered of heaven.

## ALTHÆA

What say you, women ? is all this not well done ?

## CHORUS

No man doth well but God hath part in him.

## ALTHÆA

But no part here ; for these my brethren born  
 Ye have no part in, these ye know not of  
 As I that was their sister, a sacrifice  
 Slain in their slaying. I would I had died for these ;  
 For this man dead walked with me, child by child,  
 And made a weak staff for my feebler feet  
 With his own tender wrist and hand, and held  
 And led me softly and shewed me gold and steel  
 And shining shapes of mirror and bright crown  
 And all things fair ; and threw light spears, and  
 brought

Young hounds to huddle at my feet and thrust  
 Tame heads against my little maiden breasts  
 And please me with great eyes ; and those days went  
 And these are bitter and I a barren queen  
 And sister miserable, a grievous thing  
 And mother of many curses ; and she too,  
 My sister Leda, sitting overseas  
 With fair fruits round her, and her faultless lord,

Shall curse me, saying A sorrow and not a son,  
 Sister, thou barest, even a burning fire,  
 A brand consuming thine own soul and me.  
 But ye now, sons of Thestius, make good cheer,  
 For ye shall have such wood to funeral fire  
 As no king hath ; and flame that once burnt down  
 Oil shall not quicken or breath relume or wine  
 Refresh again ; much costlier than fine gold,  
 And more than many lives of wandering men.

## CHORUS

O queen, thou hast yet with thee love-worthy things,  
 Thine husband, and the great strength of thy son.

## ALTHÆA

Who shall get brothers for me while I live ?  
 Who bear them ? who bring forth in lieu of these ?  
 Are not our fathers and our brethren one,  
 And no man like them ? are not mine here slain ?  
 Have we not hung together, he and I,  
 Flowerwise feeding as the feeding bees,  
 With mother-milk for honey ? and this man too,  
 Dead, with my son's spear thrust between his sides,  
 Hath he not seen us, later born than he,  
 Laugh with lips filled, and laughed again for love ?  
 There were no sons then in the world, nor spears,  
 Nor deadly births of women ; but the gods  
 Allowed us, and our days were clear of these.  
 I would I had died unwedded, and brought forth  
 No swords to vex the world ; for these that spake  
 Sweet words long since and loved me will not speak  
 Nor love nor look upon me ; and all my life  
 I shall not hear nor see them living men.  
 But I too living, how shall I now live ?

What life shall this be with my son, to know  
What hath been and desire what will not be,  
Look for dead eyes and listen for dead lips,  
And kill mine own heart with remembering them,  
And with those eyes that see their slayer alive  
Weep, and wring hands that clasp him by the hand ?  
How shall I bear my dreams of them, to hear  
False voices, feel the kisses of false mouths  
And footless sound of perished feet, and then  
Wake and hear only it may be their own hounds  
Whine masterless in miserable sleep,  
And see their boar-spears and their beds and seats  
And all the gear and housings of their lives  
And not the men ? shall hounds and horses mourn,  
Pine with strange eyes, and prick up hungry ears,  
Famish and fail at heart for their dear lords,  
And I not heed at all ? and those blind things  
Fall off from life for love's sake, and I live ?  
Surely some death is better than some life,  
Better one death for him and these and me  
For if the gods had slain them it may be  
I had endured it ; if they had fallen by war  
Or by the nets and knives of privy death  
And by hired hands while sleeping, this thing too  
I had set my soul to suffer ; or this hunt,  
Had this despatched them, under tusk or tooth  
Torn, sanguine, trodden, broken ; for all deaths  
Or honourable or with facile feet avenged  
And hands of swift gods following, all save this,  
Are bearable ; but not for their sweet land  
Fighting, but not a sacrifice, lo these  
Dead ; for I had not then shed all mine heart  
Out at mine eyes : then either with good speed,  
Being just, I had slain their slayer atoningly,

Or strewn with flowers their fire and on their tombs  
Hung crowns, and over them a song, and seen  
Their praise outflame their ashes : for all men,  
All maidens, had come thither, and from pure lips  
Shed songs upon them, from heroic eyes  
Tears ; and their death had been a deathless life ;  
But now, by no man hired nor alien sword,  
By their own kindred are they fallen, in peace,  
After much peril, friendless among friends,  
By hateful hands they loved ; and how shall mine  
Touch these returning red and not from war,  
These fatal from the vintage of men's veins,  
Dead men my brethren ? how shall these wash off  
No festal stains of undelightful wine,  
How mix the blood, my blood on them, with me,  
Holding mine hand ? or how shall I say, son,  
That am no sister ? but by night and day  
Shall we not sit and hate each other, and think  
Things hate-worthy ? not live with shamefast eyes,  
Brow-beaten, treading soft with fearful feet,  
Each unupbraided, each without rebuke  
Convicted, and without a word reviled  
Each of another ? and I shall let thee live  
And see thee strong and hear men for thy sake  
Praise me, but these thou wouldest not let live  
No man shall praise for ever ? these shall lie  
Dead, unbeloved, unholpen, all through thee ?  
Sweet were they toward me living, and mine heart  
Desired them, but was then well satisfied,  
That now is as men hungered ; and these dead  
I shall want always to the day I die.  
For all things else and all men may renew ;  
Yea, son for son the gods may give and take,  
But never a brother or sister any more.

## CHORUS

Nay, for the son lies close about thine heart,  
 Full of thy milk, warm from thy womb, and drains  
 Life and the blood of life and all thy fruit,  
 Eats thee and drinks thee as who breaks bread and  
 eats,  
 Treads wine and drinks, thyself, a sect of thee ;  
 And if he feed not, shall not thy flesh faint ?  
 Or drink not, are not thy lips dead for thirst ?  
 This thing moves more than all things, even thy son,  
 That thou cleave to him ; and he shall honour thee,  
 Thy womb that bare him and the breasts he knew,  
 Reverencing most for thy sake all his gods.

## ALTHAEA

But these the gods too gave me, and these my son,  
 Not reverencing his gods nor mine own heart  
 Nor the old sweet years nor all venerable things,  
 But cruel, and in his ravin like a beast,  
 Hath taken away to slay them : yea, and she  
 She the strange woman, she the flower, the sword,  
 Red from spilt blood, a mortal flower to men,  
 Adorable, detestable—even she  
 Saw with strange eyes and with strange lips rejoiced,  
 Seeing these mine own slain of mine own, and me  
 Made miserable above all miseries made,  
 A grief among all women in the world,  
 A name to be washed out with all men's tears.

## CHORUS

Strengthen thy spirit ; is this not also a god,  
 Chance, and the wheel of all necessities ?  
 Hard things have fallen upon us from harsh gods,  
 Whom lest worse hap rebuke we not for these.

## ALTHÆA

My spirit is strong against itself, and I  
 For these things' sake cry out on mine own soul  
 That it endures outrage, and dolorous days,  
 And life, and this inexpiable impotence.  
 Weak am I, weak and shameful ; my breath drawn  
 Shames me, and monstrous things and violent gods.  
 What shall atone ? what heal me ? what bring back  
 Strength to the foot, light to the face ? what herb  
 Assuage me ? what restore me ? what release ?  
 What strange thing eaten or drunken, O great gods,  
 Make me as you or as the beasts that feed,  
 Slay and divide and cherish their own hearts ?  
 For these ye show us ; and we less than these  
 Have not wherewith to live as all these things  
 Which all their lives fare after their own kind  
 As who doth well rejoicing ; but we ill,  
 Weeping or laughing, we whom eyesight fails,  
 Knowledge and light of face and perfect heart,  
 And hands we lack, and wit ; and all our days  
 Sin, and have hunger, and die infatuated.  
 For madness have ye given us and not health,  
 And sins whereof we know not ; and for these  
 Death, and sudden destruction unaware.  
 What shall we say now ? what thing comes of us ?

## CHORUS

Alas, for all this all men undergo.

## ALTHÆA

Wherefore I will not that these twain, O gods,  
 Die as a dog dies, eaten of creeping things,  
 Abominable, a loathing ; but though dead  
 Shall they have honour and such funereal flame

As strews men's ashes in their enemies' face  
And blinds their eyes who hate them : lest men say,  
" Lo how they lie, and living had great kin,  
And none of these hath pity of them, and none  
Regards them lying, and none is wrung at heart,  
None moved in spirit for them, naked and slain,  
Abhorred, abased, and no tears comfort them :"  
And in the dark this grieve Eurythemis,  
Hearing how these her sons come down to her  
Unburied, unavenged, as kinless men,  
And had a queen their sister. That were shame  
Worse than this grief. Yet how to atone at all  
I know not ; seeing the love of my born son,  
A new-made mother's new-born love, that grows  
From the soft child to the strong man, now soft  
Now strong as either, and still one sole same love,  
Strives with me, no light thing to strive withal ;  
This love is deep, and natural to man's blood,  
And ineffaceable with many tears.  
Yet shall not these rebuke me though I die,  
Nor she in that waste world with all her dead,  
My mother, among the pale flocks fallen as leaves,  
Folds of dead people, and alien from the sun ;  
Nor lack some bitter comfort, some poor praise,  
Being queen, to have borne her daughter like a queen,  
Righteous ; and though mine own fire burn me too,  
She shall have honour and these her sons, though dead.  
But all the gods will, all they do, and we  
Not all we would, yet somewhat ; and one choice  
We have, to live and do just deeds and die.

## CHORUS

Terrible words she communes with, and turns  
Swift fiery eyes in doubt against herself,  
And murmurs as who talks in dreams with death.

## ALTHÆA

For the unjust also dieth, and him all men  
 Hate, and himself abhors the unrighteousness,  
 And seeth his own dishonour intolerable.  
 But I being just, doing right upon myself,  
 Slay mine own soul, and no man born shames me.  
 For none constrains nor shall rebuke, being done,  
 What none compelled me doing ; thus these things  
 fare.

Ah, ah, that such things should so fare ; ah me,  
 That I am found to do them and endure,  
 Chosen and constrained to choose, and bear myself  
 Mine own wound through mine own flesh to the heart  
 Violently stricken, a spoiler and a spoil,  
 A ruin ruinous, fallen on mine own son.  
 Ah, ah, for me too as for these ; alas,  
 For that is done that shall be, and mine hand  
 Full of the deed, and full of blood mine eyes,  
 That shall see never nor touch anything  
 Save blood unstanch'd and fire unquenchable.

## CHORUS

What wilt thou do ? what ails thee ? for the house  
 Shakes ruinously ; wilt thou bring fire for it ?

## ALTHÆA

Fire in the roofs, and on the lintels fire.  
 Lo ye, who stand and weave, between the doors,  
 There ; and blood drips from hand and thread, and  
 stains  
 Threshold and raiment and me passing in  
 Flecked with the sudden sanguine drops of death.

## CHORUS

Alas that time is stronger than strong men,  
Fate than all gods : and these are fallen on us.

## ALTHAEA

A little since and I was glad ; and now  
I never shall be glad or sad again.

## CHORUS

Between two joys a grief grows unaware.

## ALTHAEA

A little while and I shall laugh ; and then  
I shall weep never and laugh not any more.

## CHORUS

What shall be said ? for words are thorns to grief.  
Withhold thyself a little and fear the gods.

## ALTHAEA

Fear died when these were slain ; and I am as dead,  
And fear is of the living ; these fear none.

## CHORUS

Have pity upon all people for their sake.

## ALTHAEA

It is done now ; shall I put back my day ?

## CHORUS

An end is come, an end ; this is of God.

## ALTHAEA

I am fire, and burn myself ; keep clear of fire,

## CHORUS

The house is broken, is broken ; it shall not stand

## ALTHAEA

Woe, woe for him that breaketh ; and a rod  
Smote it of old, and now the axe is here.

## CHORUS

Not as with sundering of the earth  
Nor as with cleaving of the sea  
Nor fierce foreshadowings of a birth  
Nor flying dreams of death to be  
Nor loosening of the large world's girth  
And quickening of the body of night,  
And sound of thunder in men's ears  
And fire of lightning in men's sight,  
Fate, mother of desires and fears,  
Bore unto men the law of tears ;  
But sudden, an unfathered flame,  
And broken out of night, she shone,  
She, without body, without name,  
In days forgotten and foregone ;  
And heaven rang round her as she came  
Like smitten cymbals, and lay bare ;  
Clouds and great stars, thunders and snows,  
The blue sad fields and folds of air,  
The life that breathes, the life that grows,  
All wind, all fire, that burns or blows,  
Even all these knew her : for she is great ;  
The daughter of doom, the mother of death,  
The sister of sorrow ; a lifelong weight  
That no man's finger lighteneneth,  
Nor any god can lighten fate ;

A landmark seen across the way  
 Where one race treads as the other trod ;  
 An evil sceptre, an evil stay,  
 Wrought for a staff, wrought for a rod,  
 The bitter jealousy of God.

For death is deep as the sea,  
 And fate as the waves thereof.  
 Shall the waves take pity on thee  
 Or the southwind offer thee love ?  
 Wilt thou take the night for thy day  
 Or the darkness for light on thy way,  
 Till thou say in thine heart Enough ?  
 Behold, thou art over fair, thou art over wise ;  
 The sweetness of spring in thine hair, and the light  
 in thine eyes.  
 The light of the spring in thine eyes, and the sound  
 in thine ears ;  
 Yet thine heart shall wax heavy with sighs and thine  
 eyelids with tears.  
 Wilt thou cover thine hair with gold, and with silver  
 thy feet ?  
 Hast thou taken the purple to fold thee, and made  
 thy mouth sweet ?  
 Behold, when thy face is made bare, he that loved  
 thee shall hate ;  
 Thy face shall be no more fair at the fall of thy fate.  
 For thy life shall fall as a leaf and be shed as the rain ;  
 And the veil of thine head shall be grief ; and the  
 crown shall be pain.

## ALTHÆA

Ho, ye that wail, and ye that sing, make way  
 Till I be come among you. Hide your tears,

Ye little weepers, and your laughing lips,  
 Ye laughers for a little ; lo mine eyes  
 That outweep heaven at rainiest, and my mouth  
 That laughs as gods laugh at us. Fate's are we,  
 Yet fate is ours a breathing-space ; yea, mine,  
 Fate is made mine for ever ; he is my son,  
 My bedfellow, my brother. You strong gods,  
 Give place unto me ; I am as any of you,  
 To give life and to take life. Thou, old earth,  
 That hast made man and unmade ; thou whose mouth  
 Looks red from the eaten fruits of thine own womb ;  
 Behold me with what lips upon what food  
 I feed and fill my body ; even with flesh  
 Made of my body. Lo, the fire I lit  
 I burn with fire to quench it ; yea, with flame  
 I burn up even the dust and ash thereof.

## CHORUS

Woman, what fire is this thou burnest with ?

## ALTHAEA

Yea to the bone, yea to the blood and all.

## CHORUS

For this thy face and hair are as one fire.

## ALTHAEA

A tongue that licks and beats upon the dust.

## CHORUS

And in thine eyes are hollow light and heat.

## ALTHAEA

Of flame not fed with hand or frankincense.

## CHORUS

I fear thee for the trembling of thine eyes,

## ALTHAEA

Neither with love they tremble nor for fear.

## CHORUS

And thy mouth shuddering like a shot bird.

## ALTHAEA

Not as the bride's mouth when man kisses it.

## CHORUS

Nay, but what thing is this thing thou hast done?

## ALTHAEA

Look, I am silent, speak your eyes for me.

## CHORUS

I see a faint fire lightening from the hall.

## ALTHAEA

Gaze, stretch your eyes, strain till the lids drop off.

## CHORUS

Flushed pillars down the flickering vestibule.

## ALTHAEA

Stretch with your necks like birds: cry, chirp as they.

## CHORUS

And a long brand that blackens; and white dust.

## ALTHÆA

O children, what is this ye see ? your eyes  
 Are blinder than night's face at fall of moon.  
 That is my son, my flesh, my fruit of life,  
 My travail, and the year's weight of my womb.  
 Meleager, a fire enkindled of mine hands  
 And of mine hands extinguished ; this is he.

## CHORUS

O gods, what word has flown out at thy mouth ?

## ALTHÆA

I did this and I say this and I die.

## CHORUS

Death stands upon the doorway of thy lips,  
 And in thy mouth has death set up his house.

## ALTHÆA

O death, a little, a little while, sweet death,  
 Until I see the brand burnt down and die.

## CHORUS

She reels as any reed under the wind,  
 And cleaves unto the ground with staggering feet.

## ALTHÆA

Girls, one thing will I say and hold my peace.  
 I that did this will weep not nor cry out,  
 Cry ye and weep : I will not call on gods,  
 Call ye on them ; I will not pity man,  
 Shew ye your pity. I know not if I live ;  
 Save that I feel the fire upon my face  
 And on my cheek the burning of a brand.

Yea the smoke bites me, yea I drink the steam  
With nostril and with eyelid and with lip  
Insatiate and intolerant ; and mine hands  
Burn, and fire feeds upon mine eyes ; I reel  
As one made drunk with living, whence he draws  
Drunken delight ; yet I, though mad for joy,  
Loathe my long living and am waxen red  
As with the shadow of shed blood ; behold,  
I am kindled with the flames that fade in him,  
I am swollen with subsiding of his veins,  
I am flooded with his ebbing ; my lit eyes  
Flame with the falling fire that leaves his lids  
Bloodless ; my cheek is luminous with blood  
Because his face is ashen. Yet, O child,  
Son, first-born, fairest—O sweet mouth, sweet eyes,  
That drew my life out through my suckling breast,  
That shone and clove mine heart through—O soft  
knees

Clinging, O tender treadings of soft feet,  
Cheeks warm with little kissing—O child, child,  
What have we made each other ? Lo, I felt  
Thy weight cleave to me, a burden of beauty, O son,  
Thy cradled brows and loveliest loving lips,  
The floral hair, the little lightening eyes,  
And all thy goodly glory ; with mine hands  
Delicately I fed thee, with my tongue  
Tenderly spake, saying, Verily in God's time,  
For all the little likeness of thy limbs,  
Son, I shall make thee a kingly man to fight,  
A lordly leader ; and hear before I die,  
“ She bore the goodliest sword of all the world.”  
Oh ! oh ! For all my life turns round on me ;  
I am severed from myself, my name is gone,  
My name that was a healing, it is changed,

My name is a consuming. From this time,  
Though mine eyes reach to the end of all these things,  
My lips shall not unfasten till I die.

## SEMICHORUS

She has filled with sighing the city,  
And the ways thereof with tears ;  
She arose, she girded her sides,  
She set her face as a bride's ;  
She wept, and she had no pity ;  
Trembled, and felt no fears.

## SEMICHORUS

Her eyes were clear as the sun,  
Her brows were fresh as the day ;  
She girded herself with gold,  
Her robes were manifold ;  
But the days of her worship are done,  
Her praise is taken away.

## SEMICHORUS

For she set her hand to the fire,  
With her mouth she kindled the same  
As the mouth of a flute-player,  
So was the mouth of her ;  
With the might of her strong desire  
She blew the breath of the flame.

## SEMICHORUS

She set her hand to the wood,  
She took the fire in her hand ;  
As one who is nigh to death,  
She panted with strange breath ;  
She opened her lips unto blood,  
She breathed and kindled the brand.

## SEMICHORUS

As a wood-dove newly shot,  
 She sobbed and lifted her breast ;  
 She sighed and covered her eyes,  
 Filling her lips with sighs ;  
 She sighed, she withdrew herself not,  
 She restrained not, taking not rest ;

## SEMICHORUS

But as the wind which is drouth,  
 And as the air which is death,  
 As storm that severeth ships,  
 Her breath severing her lips,  
 The breath came forth of her mouth  
 And the fire came forth of her breath.

## SECOND MESSENGER

Queen, and you maidens, there is come on us  
 A thing more deadly than the face of death ;  
 Meleager the good lord is as one slain.

## SEMICHORUS

Without sword, without sword is he stricken :  
 Slain, and slain without hand.

## SECOND MESSENGER

For as keen ice divided of the sun  
 His limbs divide, and as thawed snow the flesh  
 Thaws from off all his body to the hair.

## SEMICHORUS

He wastes as the embers quicken ;  
 With the brand he fades as a brand.

## SECOND MESSENGER

Even while they sang and all drew hither and he  
 Lifted both hands to crown the Arcadian's hair  
 And fix the looser leaves, both hands fell down.

## SEMICHORUS

With rending of cheek and of hair  
 Lament ye, mourn for him, weep.

## SECOND MESSENGER

Straightway the crown slid off and smote on earth,  
 First fallen ; and he, grasping his own hair, groaned  
 And cast his raiment round his face and fell.

## SEMICHORUS

Alas for visions that were,  
 And soothsayings spoken in sleep.

## SECOND MESSENGER

But the king twitched his reins in and leapt down  
 And caught him, crying out twice " O child " and  
 thrice,  
 So that men's eyelids thickened with their tears.

## SEMICHORUS

Lament with a long lamentation,  
 Cry, for an end is at hand.

## SECOND MESSENGER

O son, he said, son, lift thine eyes, draw breath,  
 Pity me ; but Meleager with sharp lips  
 Gasped, and his face waxed like as sunburnt grass.

## SEMICHORUS

Cry aloud, O thou kingdom, O nation,  
O stricken, a ruinous land.

## SECOND MESSENGER

Whereat king *Œ*neus, straightening feeble knees,  
With feeble hands heaved up a lessening weight,  
And laid him sadly in strange hands, and wept.

## SEMICHORUS

Thou art smitten, her lord, her desire,  
Thy dear blood wasted as rain.

## SECOND MESSENGER

And they with tears and rendings of the beard  
Bear hither a breathing body, wept upon  
And lightening at each footfall, sick to death.

## SEMICHORUS

Thou madest thy sword as a fire,  
With fire for a sword thou art slain.

## SECOND MESSENGER

And lo, the feast turned funeral, and the crowns  
Fallen ; and the huntress and the hunter trapped ;  
And weeping and changed faces and veiled hair.

## MELEAGER

Let your hands meet  
Round the weight of my head ;  
Lift ye my feet  
As the feet of the dead ;

For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it  
molten as lead.

## CHORUS

O thy luminous face.  
 Thine imperious eyes !  
 O the grief, O the grace,  
 As of day when it dies !

Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and  
 suppression of sighs ?

## MELEAGER

Is a bride so fair ?  
 Is a maid so meek ?  
 With unchapleted hair,  
 With unfileted cheek,

Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as  
 blessing to speak.

## ATALANTA

I would that with feet  
 Unsandalled, unshod,  
 Overbold, overfleet,  
 I had swum not nor trod  
 From Arcadia to Calydon northward, a blast of the  
 envy of God.

## MELEAGER

Unto each man his fate ;  
 Unto each as he saith  
 In whose fingers the weight  
 Of the world is as breath ;  
 Yet I would that in clamour of battle mine hands had  
 laid hold upon death.

## CHORUS

Not with cleaving of shields  
And their clash in thine ear,  
When the lord of fought fields  
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,  
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with  
travail and labour and fear.

## MELEAGER

Would God he had found me  
Beneath fresh boughs !  
Would God he had bound me  
Unawares in mine house,  
With light in mine eyes, and songs in my lips, and a  
crown on my brows !

## CHORUS

Whence art thou sent from us ?  
Whither thy goal ?  
How art thou rent from us,  
Thou that wert whole,  
As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sunder-  
ing of body and soul !

## MELEAGER

My heart is within me  
As an ash in the fire ;  
Whosoever hath seen me,  
Without lute, without lyre,  
Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that  
were ill to desire.

## CHORUS

Who shall raise thee  
 From the house of the dead ?  
 Or what man praise thee  
 That thy praise may be said ?  
 Alas thy beauty ! alas thy body ! alas thine head !

## MELEAGER

But thou, O mother,  
 The dreamer of dreams,  
 Wilt thou bring forth another  
 To feel the sun's beams  
 When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail  
 by impassable streams ?

## ŒNEUS

What thing wilt thou leave me  
 Now this thing is done ?  
 A man wilt thou give me,  
 A son for my son,  
 For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the  
 desirable one ?

## CHORUS

Thou wert glad above others,  
 Yea, fair beyond word ;  
 Thou wert glad among mothers ;  
 For each man that heard  
 Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings  
 to the feet of a bird.

## GENEUS

Who shall give back  
Thy face of old years,  
With travail made black,  
Grown grey among fears,  
Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of  
tears?

## MELEAGER

Though thou art as fire  
Fed with fuel in vain,  
My delight, my desire,  
Is more chaste than the rain,  
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are  
that live without stain.

## ATALANTA

I would that as water  
My life's blood had thawed,  
Or as winter's wan daughter  
Leaves lowland and lawn  
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld thee  
made dark in thy dawn.

## CHORUS

When thou dravest the men  
Of the chosen of Thrace,  
None turned him again.  
Nor endured he thy face  
Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light  
from a terrible place.

## CENEUS

Thou shouldst die as he dies  
 For whom none sheddeth tears ;  
 Filling thine eyes  
 And fulfilling thine ears  
 With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the  
 beauty, the splendour of spears.

## CHORUS

In the ears of the world  
 It is sung, it is told,  
 And the light thereof hurled  
 And the noise thereof rolled  
 From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the  
 fleece of gold.

## MELEAGER

Would God ye could carry me  
 Forth of all these ;  
 Heap sand and bury me  
 By the Chersonese  
 Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the  
 thunder of Pontic seas.

## CENEUS

Dost thou mock at our praise  
 And the singing begun  
 And the men of strange days  
 Praising my son  
 In the folds of the hills of home, high places of  
 Calydon ?

## MELEAGER

For the dead man no home is ;  
Ah, better to be  
What the flower of the foam is  
In fields of the sea,  
That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the  
gulf-stream a garment for me.

## CHORUS

Who shall seek thee and bring  
And restore thee thy day,  
When the dove dipt her wing  
And the oars won their way  
Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the  
straits of Propontis with spray ?

## MELEAGER

Will ye crown me my tomb  
Or exalt me my name,  
Now my spirits consume,  
Now my flesh is a flame ?  
Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleep-  
ing to praise me or shame.

## CHORUS

Turn back now, turn thee,  
As who turns him to wake ;  
Though the life in thee burn thee,  
Couldst thou bathe it and slake  
Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east  
upon west waters break ?

## MELEAGER

Would the winds blow me back  
 Or the waves huri me home ?  
 Ah, to touch in the track  
 Where the pine learnt to roam  
 Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool  
 blossoms of water and foam !

## CHORUS

The gods may release  
 That they made fast ;  
 Thy soul shall have ease  
 In thy limbs at the last ;  
 But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that  
 is overpast ?

## MELEAGER

Not the life of men's veins,  
 Not of flesh that conceives ;  
 But the grace that remains,  
 The fair beauty that cleaves  
 To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the  
 dews on the leaves.

## CHORUS

Thou wert helmsman and chief ;  
 Wilt thou turn in an hour,  
 Thy limbs to the leaf,  
 Thy face to the flower,  
 Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who  
 divide and devour ?

## MELEAGER

The years are hungry,  
 They wail all their days ;  
 The gods wax angry  
 And weary of praise ;  
 And who shall bridle their lips ? and who shall straiten  
 their ways ?

## CHORUS

The gods guard over us  
 With sword and with rod ;  
 Weaving shadow to cover us,  
 Heaping the sod,  
 That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's  
 face before God.

## MELEAGER

O holy head of Æneus, lo thy son  
 Guiltless, yet red from alien guilt, yet foul  
 With kinship of contaminated lives,  
 Lo, for their blood I die ; and mine own blood  
 For bloodshedding of mine is mixed therewith,  
 That death may not discern me from my kin.  
 Yet with clean heart I die and faultless hand,  
 Not shamefully ; thou therefore of thy love  
 Salute me, and bid fare among the dead  
 Well, as the dead fare ; for the best man dead  
 Fares sadly ; nathless I now faring well  
 Pass without fear where nothing is to fear  
 Having thy love about me and thy goodwill,  
 O father, among dark places and men dead.

## CENEUS

Child, I salute thee with sad heart and tears,  
And bid thee comfort, being a perfect man  
In fight, and honourable in the house of peace.  
The gods give thee fair wage and dues of death,  
And me brief days and ways to come at thee.

## MELEAGER

Pray thou thy days be long before thy death,  
And full of ease and kingdom ; seeing in death  
There is no comfort and none aftergrowth,  
Nor shall one thence look up and see day's dawn  
Nor light upon the land whither I go.  
Live thou and take thy fill of days and die  
When thy day comes ; and make not much of death  
Lest ere thy day thou reap an evil thing.  
Thou too, the bitter mother and mother-plague  
Of this my weary body—thou too, queen,  
The source and end, the sower and the scythe,  
The rain that ripens and the drought that slays,  
The sand that swallows and the spring that feeds,  
To make me and unmake me—thou, I say,  
Althæa, since my father's ploughshare, drawn  
Through fatal seedland of a female field,  
Furrowed thy body, whence a wheaten ear  
Strong from the sun and fragrant from the rains  
I sprang and cleft the closure of thy womb,  
Mother, I dying with unforgetful tongue  
Hail thee as holy and worship thee as just  
Who art unjust and unholy ; and with my knees  
Would worship, but thy fire and subtlety,  
Dissundering them, devour me ; for these limbs  
Are as light dust and crumblings from mine urn

Before the fire has touched them ; and my face  
As a dead leaf or dead foot's mark on snow,  
And all this body a broken barren tree  
That was so strong, and all this flower of life  
Disbranched and desecrated miserably,  
And diminished all that god-like muscle and might  
And lesser than a man's : for all my veins  
Fail me, and all mine ashen life burns down.  
I would thou hadst let me live ; but gods averse,  
But fortune, and the fiery feet of change,  
And time, these would not, these tread out my life,  
These and not thou ; me too thou hast loved, and I  
Thee ; but this death was mixed with all my life,  
Mine end with my beginning : and this law,  
This only, slays me, and not my mother at all.  
And let no brother or sister grieve too sore,  
Nor melt their hearts out on me with their tears,  
Since extreme love and sorrowing overmuch  
Vex the great gods, and overloving men  
Slay and are slain for love's sake ; and this house  
Shall bear much better children ; why should these  
Weep ? but in patience let them live their lives  
And mine pass by forgotten : thou alone,  
Mother, thou sole and only, thou not these,  
Keep me in mind a little when I die  
Because I was thy first-born ; let thy soul  
Pity me, pity even me gone hence and dead,  
Though thou wert wroth, and though thou bear again  
Much happier sons, and all men later born  
Exceedingly excel me ; yet do thou  
Forget not, nor think shame ; I was thy son.  
Time was I did not shame thee ; and time was  
I thought to live and make thee honourable  
With deeds as great as these men's ; but they live,

These, and I die ; and what thing should have been  
Surely I know not ; yet I charge thee, seeing  
I am dead already, love me not the less,  
Me, O my mother ; I charge thee by these gods,  
My father's, and that holier breast of thine,  
By these that see me dying, and that which nursed,  
Love me not less, thy first-born : though grief come,  
Grief only, of me, and of all these great joy,  
And shall come always to thee ; for thou knowest,  
O mother, O breasts that bare me, for ye know,  
O sweet head of my mother, sacred eyes,  
Ye know my soul albeit I sinned, ye know  
Albeit I kneel not neither touch thy knees,  
But with my lips I kneel, and with my heart  
I fall about thy feet and worship thee.  
And ye farewell now, all my friends ; and ye,  
Kinsmen, much younger and glorious more than I,  
Sons of my mother's sister ; and all farewell  
That were in Colchis with me, and bare down  
The waves and wars that met us : and though times  
Change, and though now I be not anything,  
Forget not me among you, what I did  
In my good time ; for even by all those days,  
Those days and this, and your own living souls,  
And by the light and luck of you that live,  
And by this miserable spoil, and me  
Dying, I beseech you, let my name not die.  
But thou, dear, touch me with thy rose-like hands.  
And fasten up mine eyelids with thy mouth,  
A bitter kiss ; and grasp me with thine arms,  
Printing with heavy lips my light waste flesh,  
Made light and thin by heavy-handed fate,  
And with thine holy maiden eyes drop dew,  
Drop tears for dew upon me who am dead,

Me who have loved thee ; seeing without sin done  
 I am gone down to the empty weary house  
 Where no flesh is nor beauty nor swift eyes  
 Nor sound of mouth nor might of hands and feet.  
 But thou, dear, hide my body with thy veil,  
 And with thy raiment cover foot and head,  
 And stretch thyself upon me and touch hands  
 With hands and lips with lips : be pitiful  
 As thou art maiden perfect ; let no man  
 Defile me to despise me, saying, This man  
 Died woman-wise, a woman's offering, slain  
 Through female fingers in his woof of life,  
 Dishonourable ; for thou hast honoured me.  
 And now for God's sake kiss me once and twice  
 And let me go ; for the night gathers me,  
 And in the night shall no man gather fruit

## ATALANTA

Hail thou : but I with heavy face and feet  
 Turn homeward and am gone out of thine eyes.

## CHORUS

Who shall contend with his lords  
 Or cross them or do them wrong ?  
 Who shall bind them as with cords ?  
 Who shall tame them as with song ?  
 Who shall smite them as with swords ?  
 For the hands of their kingdom are strong.



# ERECHTHEUS

## A TRAGEDY

ὦ ταὶ Λιοναῖς καὶ ἰοστέφαινις οὐδὲ οὐδὲ οὐδὲ,  
Ἐλλάδος ἔρεισμα, κλειναὶ Ἀθῆναι, δαιμόνιον πτολίεθρον

PIND. *Fr.* 47.

ΑΤ. τίς οὐ ποιάνωρ ἐπεστι κάπιδεσπόζει στρατοῦ;  
ΧΟ. οὐτιγος δοῦλοι κέκληνται φωτὸς οὐδὲ ὑπηκόοι.

AESCH. *Pers.* 241-2.



TO

MY MOTHER



**PERSONS**

**ERECHTHEUS.**

**CHORUS OF ATHENIAN ELDERS.**

**PRAXITHEA**

**CHTHONIA.**

**HERALD OF EUMOLPUS**

**MESSENGER.**

**ATHENIAN HERALD**

**ATHENA.**



## ERECHTHEUS

## ERECHTHEUS

MOTHER of life and death and all men's days,  
Earth, whom I chief of all men born would bless,  
And call thee with more loving lips than theirs  
Mother, for of this very body of thine  
And living blood I have my breath and live,  
Behold me, even thy son, me crowned of men,  
Me made thy child by that strong cunning God  
Who fashions fire and iron, who begat  
Me for a sword and beacon-fire on thee,  
Me fosterling of Pallas, in her shade  
Reared, that I first might pay the nursing debt,  
Hallowing her fame with flower of third-year feasts,  
And first bow down the bridled strength of steeds  
To lose the wild wont of their birth, and bear  
Clasp of man's knees and steerage of his hand  
Or fourfold service of his fire-swift wheels  
That whirl the four-yoked chariot ; me the king  
Who stand before thee naked now, and cry,  
O holy and general mother of all men born,  
But mother most and motherliest of mine,  
Earth, for I ask thee rather of all the Gods,  
What have we done ? what word mistimed or work  
Hath winged the wild feet of this timeless curse  
To fall as fire upon us ? Lo, I stand

Here on this brow's crown of the city's head  
That crowns its lovely body, till death's hour  
Waste it ; but now the dew of dawn and birth  
Is fresh upon it from thy womb, and we  
Behold it born how beauteous ; one day more  
I see the world's wheel of the circling sun  
Roll up rejoicing to regard on earth  
This one thing goodliest, fair as heaven or he,  
Worth a God's gaze or strife of Gods ; but now  
Would this day's ebb of their spent wave of strife  
Sweep it to sea, wash it on wreck, and leave  
A costless thing contemned ; and in our stead,  
Where these walls were and sounding streets of men,  
Make wide a waste for tongueless water-herds  
And spoil of ravening fishes ; that no more  
Should men say, Here was Athens. This shalt thou  
Sustain not, nor thy son endure to see,  
Nor thou to live and look on ; for the womb  
Bare me not base that bare me miserable,  
To hear this loud brood of the Thracian foam  
Break its broad strength of billowy-beating war  
Here, and upon it as a blast of death  
Blowing, the keen wrath of a fire-souled king,  
A strange growth grafted on our natural soil,  
A root of Thrace in Eleusinian earth  
Set for no comfort to the kindly land,  
Son of the sea's lord and our first-born foe,  
Eumolpus ; nothing sweet in ears of thine  
The music of his making, nor a song  
Toward hopes of ours auspicious ; for the note  
Rings as for death oracular to thy sons  
That goes before him on the sea-wind blown  
Full of this charge laid on me, to put out  
The brief light kindled of mine own child's life,

Or with this helmsman hand that steers the state  
Run right on the under shoal and ridge of death  
The populous ship with all its fraughtage gone  
And sails that were to take the wind of time  
Rent, and the tackling that should hold out fast  
In confluent surge of loud calamities  
Broken, with spars of rudders and lost oars  
That were to row toward harbour and find rest  
In some most glorious haven of all the world  
And else may never near it: such a song  
The Gods have set his lips on fire withal  
Who threatens now in all their names to bring  
Ruin; but none of these, thou knowest, have I  
Chid with my tongue or cursed at heart for grief,  
Knowing how the soul runs reinless on sheer death  
Whose grief or joy takes part against the Gods.  
And what they will is more than our desire,  
And their desire is more than what we will.  
For no man's will and no desire of man's  
Shall stand as doth a God's will. Yet, O fair  
Mother, that seest me how I cast no word  
Against them, plead no reason, crave no cause,  
Boast me not blameless, nor beweep me wronged,  
By this fair wreath of towers we have decked thee  
with,  
This chaplet that we give thee woven of walls,  
This girdle of gale and temple and citadel  
Drawn round beneath thy bosom, and fast linked  
As to thine heart's root—this dear crown of thine.  
This present light, this city—be not thou  
Slow to take heed nor slack to strengthen her,  
Fare we so short-lived howsoe'er, and pay  
What price we may to ransom thee thy town,  
Not me my life; but thou that diest not, thou,

Though all our house die for this people's sake,  
 Keep thou for ours thy crown our city, guard  
 And give it life the lovelier that we died.

## CHORUS.

Sun, that hast lightened and loosed by thy might  
 Ocean and Earth from the lordship of night,  
 Quickening with vision his eye that was veiled,  
 Freshening the force in her heart that had failed,  
 That sister fettered and blinded brother  
 Should have sight by thy grace and delight of each  
 other,

Behold now and see

What profit is given them of thee ;  
 What wrath has enkindled with madness of mind  
 Her limbs that were bounden, his face that was blind,  
 To be locked as in wrestle together, and lighten  
 With fire that shall darken thy fire in the sky,  
 Body to body and eye against eye

In a war against kind,

Till the bloom of her fields and her high hills whiten  
 With the foam of his waves more high.

For the sea-marks set to divide of old  
 The kingdoms to Ocean and Earth assigned,  
 The hoar sea-fields from the cornfields' gold,  
 His wine-bright waves from her vineyards' fold,

Frail forces we find

To bridle the spirit of Gods or bind

Till the heat of their hearts wax cold.

But the peace that was stablished between them to  
 stand

Is rent now in twain by the strength of his hand  
 Who stirs up the storm of his sons overbold  
 To pluck from fight what he lost of right,

By council and judgment of Gods that spake  
 And gave great Pallas the strife's fair stake,  
 The lordship and love of the lovely land,  
 The grace of the town that hath on it for crown  
     But a headband to wear  
     Of violets one-hued with her hair :  
 For the vales and the green high places of earth  
     Hold nothing so fair,  
 And the depths of the sea bear no such birth  
     Of the manifold births they bear.  
 Too well, too well was the great stake worth  
 A strife divine for the Gods to judge,  
 A crowned God's triumph, a foiled God's grudge,  
 Though the loser be strong and the victress wise  
 Who played long since for so large a prize,  
 The fruitful immortal anointed adored  
 Dear city of men without master or lord,  
 Fair fortress and fostress of sons born free,  
 Who stand in her sight and in thine, O sun,  
 Slaves of no man, subjects of none ;  
 A wonder enthroned on the hills and sea,  
 A maiden crowned with a fourfold glory  
 That none from the pride of her head may rend,  
 Violet and olive-leaf purple and hoary,  
 Song-wreath and story the fairest of fame,  
 Flowers that the winter can blast not or bend ;  
 A light upon earth as the sun's own flame,  
     A name as his name,  
     Athens, a praise without end.

A noise is arisen against us of waters,                   [*Str. 1.*  
 A sound as of battle come up from the sea.  
 Strange hunters are hard on us, hearts without pity ;  
 They have staked their nets round the fair young city,

That the sons of her strength and her virgin daughters

Should find not whither alive to flee.

And we know not yet of the word unwritten, [Ant. 1.

The doom of the Pythian we have not heard;

From the navel of earth and the veiled mid altar  
We wait for a token with hopes that falter,

With fears that hang on our hearts thought-smitten

Lest her tongue be kindled with no good word.

O thou not born of the womb, nor bred [Str. 2.

In the bride-night's warmth of a changed God's bed,

But thy life as a lightning was flashed from the light  
of thy father's head,

O chief God's child by a motherless birth,

If aught in thy sight we indeed be worth,

Keep death from us thou, that art none of the Gods  
of the dead under earth.

Thou that hast power on us, save, if thou wilt; [Ant. 2.

Let the blind wave breach not thy wall scarce  
built;

But bless us not so as by bloodshed, impute not for  
grace to us guilt,

Nor by price of pollution of blood set us free;

Let the hands be taintless that clasp thy knee,

Nor a maiden be slain to redeem for a maiden her  
shrine from the sea.

O earth, O sun, turn back

[Str. 3.

Full on his deadly track

Death, that would smite you black and mar your  
creatures,

And with one hand disroot

All tender flower and fruit,

With one strike blind and mute the heaven's fair  
features.

Pluck out the eyes of morn, and make  
 Silence in the east and blackness whence the bright  
 songs break.

Help, earth, help, heaven, that hear [Ant. 3.  
 The song-notes of our fear,  
 Shrewd notes and shrill, not clear or joyful-sounding ;  
 Hear, highest of Gods, and stay  
 Death on his hunter's way,  
 Full on his forceless prey his beagles hounding ;  
 Break thou his bow, make short his hand,  
 Maim his fleet foot whose passage kills the living  
 land.

Let a third wave smite not us, father, [Str. 4  
 Long since sore smitten of twain,  
 Lest the house of thy son's son perish  
 And his name be barren on earth.

Whose race wilt thou comfort rather  
 If none to thy son remain ?  
 Whose seed wilt thou choose to cherish  
 If his be cut off in the birth ?

For the first fair graft of his grafting [Ant. 4  
 Was rent from its maiden root  
 By the strong swift hand of a lover  
 Who fills the night with his breath ;  
 On the lip of the stream low-laughing  
 Her green soft virginal shoot  
 Was plucked from the stream-side cover  
 By the grasp of a love like death.

For a God's was the mouth that kissed her [Str. 5.  
 Who speaks, and the leaves lie dead,  
 When winter awakes as at warning  
 To the sound of his foot from Thrace.

Nor happier the bed of her sister  
 Though Love's self laid her abed

## ERECHTHEUS

O, of what breath shall such a word be made,  
Or from what heart find utterance? Would my  
tongue

Were rent forth rather from the quivering root  
Than made as fire or poison thus for thee.

## PRAXITHEA

But if thou speak of blood, and I that hear  
Be chosen of all for this land's love to die  
And save to thee thy city, know this well,  
Happiest I hold me of her seed alive.

## ERECHTHEUS

O sun that seest, what saying was this of thine,  
God, that thy power has breathed into my lips?  
For from no sunlit shrine darkling it came.

## PRAXITHEA

What portent from the mid oracular place  
Hath smitten thee so like a curse that flies  
Wingless, to waste men with its plagues? yet speak.

## ERECHTHEUS

Thy blood the Gods require not; take this first.

## PRAXITHEA

To me than thee more grievous this should sound.

## ERECHTHEUS

That word rang truer and bitterer than it knew.

## PRAXITHEA

This is not then thy grief, to see me die?

ERECHTHEUS

Die shalt thou not, yet give thy blood to death.

PRAXITHEA

If this ring worse I know not ; strange it rang.

ERECHTHEUS

Alas, thou knowest not ; woe is me that know.

PRAXITHEA

And woe shall mine be, knowing ; yet halt not here.

ERECHTHEUS

Guiltless of blood this state may stand no more.

PRAXITHEA

Firm let it stand whatever bleed or fal!.

ERECHTHEUS

O Gods, that I should say it shall and weep.

PRAXITHEA

Weep, and say this? no tears should bathe such words.

ERECHTHEUS

Woe's me that I must weep upon them, woe.

PRAXITHEA

What stain is on them for thy tears to cleanse ?

ERECHTHEUS

A stain of blood unpurgeable with tears.

PRAXITHEA

Whence? fo: thou sayest it is and is not mine.

## ERECHTHEUS

Hear then and know why only of all men I  
 That bring such news as mine is, I alone  
 Must wash good words with weeping ; I and thou,  
 Woman, must wail to hear men sing, must groan  
 To see their joy who love us ; all our friends  
 Save only we, and all save we that love  
 This holiness of Athens, in our sight  
 Shall lift their hearts up, in our hearing praise  
 Gods whom we may not ; for to these they give  
 Life of their children, flower of all their seed,  
 For all their travail fruit, for all their hopes  
 Harvest ; but we for all our good things, we  
 Have at their hands which fill all these folk full  
 Death, barrenness, child-slaughter, curses, cares,  
 Sea-leaguer and land-shipwreck ; which of these,  
 Which wilt thou first give thanks for ? all are thine.

## PRAXITHEA

What first they give who give this city good,  
 For that first given to save it I give thanks  
 First, and thanks heartier from a happier tongue,  
 More than for any my peculiar grace  
 Shown me and not my country ; next for this  
 That none of all these but for all these I  
 Must bear my burden, and no eye but mine  
 Weep of all women's in this broad land born  
 Who see their land's deliverance ; but much more,  
 But most for this I thank them most of all,  
 That this their edge of doom is chosen to pierce  
 My heart and not my country's ; for the sword  
 Drawn to smite there and sharpened for such stroke  
 Should wound more deep than any turned on me.

## CHORUS

Well fares the land that bears such fruit, and well  
The spirit that breeds such thought and speech in man.

## ERECHTHEUS

O woman, thou hast shamed my heart with thine,  
To show so strong a patience ; take then all ;  
For all shall break not nor bring down thy soul.  
The word that journeying to the bright God's shrine  
Who speaks askance and darkling, but his name  
Hath in it slaying and ruin broad writ out,  
I heard, hear thou : thus saith he ; There shall die  
One soul for all this people ; from thy womb  
Came forth the seed that here on dry bare ground  
Death's hand must sow untimely, to bring forth  
Nor blade nor shoot in season, being by name  
To the under Gods made holy, who require  
For this land's life her death and maiden blood  
To save a maiden city. Thus I heard,  
And thus with all said leave thee ; for save this  
No word is left us, and no hope alive.

## CHORUS

He hath uttered too surely his wrath not obscurely,  
nor wrapt as in mists of his breath, [Str.  
The master that lightens not hearts he enlightens, but  
gives them foreknowledge of death.

As a bolt from the cloud hath he sent it aloud and  
proclaimed it afar,  
From the darkness and height of the horror of night  
hath he shown us a star.

Star may I name it and err not, or flame shall I say,  
Born of the womb that was born for the tomb  
of the day ?

O Night, whom other but thee for mother, and Death  
for the father, Night, [Ant.

Snall we dream to discover, save thee and thy lover,  
to bring such a sorrow to sight?

From the slumberless bed for thy bedfellow spread  
and his bride under earth

Hast thou brought forth a wild and insatiable child,  
an unbearable birth.

Fierce are the fangs of his wrath, and the pangs  
that they give;

None is there, none that may bear them, not one  
that would live.

#### CHTHONIA

Forth of the fine-spun folds of veils that hide  
My virgin chamber toward the full-faced sun  
I set my foot not moved of mine own will,  
Unmaidenlike, nor with unprompted speed  
Turn eyes too broad or doglike unabashed  
On reverend heads of men and thence on thine,  
Mother, now covered from the light and bowed  
As hers who mourns her brethren; but what grief  
Bends thy blind head thus earthward, holds thus mute,  
I know not till thy will be to lift up  
Toward mine thy sorrow-muffled eyes and speak;  
And till thy will be would I know this not.

#### PRAXITHEA

Old men and childless, or if sons ye have seen  
And daughters, elder-born were these than mine,  
Look on this child, how young of years, how sweet,  
How scant of time and green of age her lite  
Puts forth its flower of girlhood; and her gait  
How virginal, how soft her speech, her eyes

How seemly smiling ; wise should all ye be,  
 All honourable and kindly men of age ;  
 Now give me counsel and one word to say  
 That I may bear to speak, and hold my peace  
 Henceforth for all time even as all ye now.  
 Dumb are ye all, bowed eyes and tongueless mouths,  
 Unprofitable ; if this were wind that speaks,  
 As much its breath might move you. Thou then,  
 child,  
 Set thy sweet eyes on mine ; look through them well ;  
 Take note of all the writing of my face  
 As of a tablet or a tomb inscribed  
 That bears me record ; lifeless now, my life  
 Thereon that was think written ; brief to read,  
 Yet shall the scripture sear thine eyes as fire  
 And leave them dark as dead men's. Nay, dear child,  
 Thou hast no skill, my maiden, and no sense  
 To take such knowledge ; sweet is all thy lore,  
 And all this bitter ; yet I charge thee learn  
 And love and lay this up within thine heart,  
 Even this my word ; less ill it were to die  
 Than live and look upon thy mother dead,  
 Thy mother-land that bare thee ; no man slain  
 But him who hath seen it shall men count unblest,  
 None blest as him who hath died and seen it not.

## CHTHONIA

That sight some God keep from me though I die.

## PRAXITHEA

A God from thee shall keep it ; fear not this.

## CHTHONIA

Thanks all my life long shall he gain of mine.

PRAXITHEA

Short gain of all yet shall he get of thee.

CHTHONIA

Brief be my life, yet so long live my thanks.

PRAXITHEA

So long? so little; how long shall they live?

CHTHONIA

Even while I see the sunlight and thine eyes.

PRAXITHEA

Would mine might shut ere thine upon the sun.

CHTHONIA

For me thou prayest unkindly; change that prayer.

PRAXITHEA

Not well for me thou sayest, and ill for thee.

CHTHONIA

Nay, for me well, if thou shalt live, not I.

PRAXITHEA

How live, and lose these loving looks of thine?

CHTHONIA

It seems I too, thus praying, then, love thee not.

PRAXITHEA

Lov'st thou not life? what wouldest thou do to die?

CHTHONIA

Well, but not more than all things, love I life.

## PRAXITHEA

And fain wouldest keep it as thine age allows?

## CHTHONIA

Fain would I live, and fain not fear to die.

## PRAXITHEA

That I might bid thee die not ! Peace ; no more.

## CHORUS

A godlike race of grief the Gods have set  
For these to run matched equal, heart with heart.

## PRAXITHEA

Child of the chief of Gods, and maiden crowned,  
Queen of these towers and fostress of their king,  
Pallas, and thou my father's holiest head,  
A living well of life nor stanch'd nor stained,  
O God Cephisus, thee too charge I next,  
Be to me judge and witness ; nor thine ear  
Shall now my tongue invoke not, thou to me  
Most hateful of things holy, mournfullest  
Of all old sacred streams that wash the world,  
Ilissus, on whose marge at flowery play  
A whirlwind-footed bridegroom found my child  
And rapt her northward where mine elder-born  
Keeps now the Thracian bride-bed of a God  
Intolerable to seamen, but this land  
Finds him in hope for her sake favourable,  
A gracious son by wedlock ; hear me then  
Thou likewise, if with no faint heart or false  
The word I say be said, the gift be given,  
Which might I choose I had rather die than give  
Or speak and die not. Ere thy limbs were made

Or thine eyes lightened, strife, thou knowest, my child,

'Twixt God and God had risen, which heavenlier name

Should here stand hallowed, whose more liberal grace  
Should win this city's worship, and our land

To which of these do reverence ; first the lord

Whose wheels make lightnings of the foam-flowered sea

Here on this rock, whose height brow-bound with dawn

Is head and heart of Athens, one sheer blow  
Struck, and beneath the triple wound that shook  
The stony sinews and stark roots of the earth  
Sprang toward the sun a sharp salt fount, and sank  
Where lying it lights the heart up of the hill,  
A well of bright strange brine ; but she that reared  
Thy father with her same chaste fostering hand  
Set for a sign against it in our guard  
The holy bloom of the olive, whose hoar leaf  
High in the shadowy shrine of Pandrosus  
Hath honour of us all ; and of this strife  
The twelve most high Gods judging with one mouth  
Acclaimed her victress ; wroth whereat, as wronged  
That she should hold from him such prize and place,  
The strong king of the tempest-rifted sea  
Loosed reinless on the low Thriasian plain  
The thunders of his chariots, swallowing stunned  
Earth, beasts, and men, the whole blind foundering world  
That was the sun's at morning, and ere noon  
Death's ; nor this only prey fulfilled his mind ;  
For with strange crook-toothed prows of Carian folk  
Who snatch a sanguine life out of the sea,

Thieves keen to pluck their bloody fruit of spoil  
From the grey fruitless waters, has their God  
Furrowed our shores to waste them, as the fields  
Were landward harried from the north with swords  
Aonian, sickles of man-slaughtering edge  
Ground for no hopeful harvest of live grain  
Against us in Bœotia ; these being spent,  
Now this third time his wind of wrath has blown  
Right on this people a mightier wave of war,  
Three times more huge a ruin ; such its ridge  
Foam-rimmed and hollow like the womb of heaven,  
But black for shining, and with death for life  
Big now to birth and ripe with child, full-blown  
With fear and fruit of havoc, takes the sun  
Out of our eyes, darkening the day, and blinds  
The fair sky's face unseasonably with change,  
A cloud in one and billow of battle, a surge  
High reared as heaven with monstrous surf of spears  
That shake on us their shadow, till men's heads  
Bend, and their hearts even with its forward wind  
Wither, so blasts ail seed in them of hope  
Its breath and blight of presage ; yea, even now  
The winter of this wind out of the deeps  
Makes cold our trust in comfort of the Gods  
And blind our eye toward outlook ; yet not here,  
Here never shall the Thracian plant on high  
For ours his father's symbol, nor with wreaths  
A strange folk wreath it upright set and crowned  
Here where our natural people born behold  
The golden Gorgon of the shield's defence  
That screens their flowering olive, nor strange Gods  
Be graced, and Pallas here have praise no more.  
And if this be not I must give my child,  
Thee, mine own very blood and spirit of mine,

Thee to be slain. Turn from me, turn thine eyes  
A little from me ; I can bear not yet  
To see if still they smile on mine or no,  
If fear make faint the light in them, or faith  
Fix them as stars of safety. Need have we,  
Sore need of stars that set not in mid storm,  
Lights that outlast the lightnings ; yet my heart  
Endures not to make proof of thine or these,  
Not yet to know thee whom I made, and bare  
What manner of woman ; had I borne thee man,  
I had made no question of thine eyes or heart,  
Nor spared to read the scriptures in them writ,  
Wert thou my son ; yet couldst thou then but die  
Fallen in sheer fight by chance and charge of spears  
And have no more of memory, fill no tomb  
More famous than thy fellows in fair field,  
Where many share the grave, many the praise :  
But one crown shall one only girl my child  
Wear, dead for this dear city, and give back life  
To him that gave her and to me that bare,  
And save two sisters living ; and all this,  
Is this not all good ? I shall give thee, child,  
Thee but by fleshly nature mine, to bleed  
For dear land's love ; but if the city fall  
What part is left me in my children then ?  
But if it stand and thou for it lie dead,  
Then hast thou in it a better part than we,  
A holier portion than we all ; for each  
Hath but the length of his own life to live,  
And this most glorious mother-land on earth  
To worship till that life have end ; but thine  
Hath end no more than hers ; thou, dead, shalt live  
Till Athens live not ; for the days and nights  
Given of thy bare brief dark dividual life,

Shall she give thee half all her agelong own  
 And all its glory ; for thou givest her these ;  
 But with one hand she takes and gives again  
 More than I gave or she requires of thee.  
 Come therefore, I will make thee fit for death,  
 I that could give thee, dear, no gift at birth  
 Save of light life that breathes and bleeds, even I  
 Will help thee to this better gift than mine  
 And lead thee by this little living hand  
 That death shall make so strong, to that great end  
 Whence it shall lighten like a God's, and strike  
 Dead the strong heart of battle that would break  
 Athens ; but ye, pray for this land, old men,  
 That it may bring forth never child on earth  
 To love it less, for none may more, than we.

## CHORUS

Out of the north wind grief came forth, [Str. 1.  
 And the shining of a sword out of the sea.  
 Yea, of old the first-blown blast blew the prelude  
 of this last,  
 The blast of his trumpet upon Rhodope.  
 Out of the north skies full of his cloud,  
 With the clamour of his storms as of a crowd  
 At the wheels of a great king crying aloud,  
 At the axle of a strong king's car  
 That has girded on the girdle of war—  
 With hands that lightened the skies in sunder  
 And feet whose fall was followed of thunder,  
 A God, a great God strange of name,  
 With horse-yoke fleeter-hoofed than flame,  
 To the mountain bed of a maiden came,  
 Oreithyia, the bride mismated,

Wofully wed in a snow-strewn bed  
 With a bridegroom that kisses the bride's mouth  
 dead ;

Without garland, without glory, without song,  
 As a fawn by night on the hills belated,  
 Given over for a spoil unto the strong.

From lips how pale so keen a wail [Ant. 1.

At the grasp of a God's hand on her she gave,  
 When his breath that darkens air made a havoc  
 of her hair,

It rang from the mountain even to the wave ;  
 Rang with a cry, *Woe's me, woe is me !*

From the darkness upon Hæmus to the sea :  
 And with hands that clung to her new lord's knee,  
 As a virgin overborne with shame,  
 She besought him by her spouseless fame,  
 By the blameless breasts of a maid unmarried,  
 And locks unmaidenly rent and harried,

And all her flower of body, born  
 To match the maidenhood of morn,  
 With the might of the wind's wrath wrenched and  
 torn.

Vain, all vain as a dead man's vision  
 Falling by night in his old friends' sight,  
 To be scattered with slumber and slain ere light ;  
 Such a breath of such a bridegroom in that hour  
 Of her prayers made mock, of her fears derision,  
 And a ravage of her youth as of a flower.

With a leap of his limbs as a lion's, a cry from his  
 lips as of thunder, [Str. 2.

In a storm of amorous godhead filled with fire,  
 From the height of the heaven that was rent with  
 the roar of his coming in sunder,  
 Sprang the strong God on the spoil of his desire.

And the pines of the hills were as green reeds  
shattered,  
And their branches as buds of the soft spring  
scattered,  
And the west wind and east, and the sound of the  
south,  
Fell dumb at the blast of the north wind's mouth,  
At the cry of his coming out of heaven.  
And the wild beasts quailed in the rifts and hollows  
Where hound nor clarion of huntsman follows,  
And the depths of the sea were aghast, and  
whitened,  
And the crowns of their waves were as flame that  
lightened,  
And the heart of the floods thereof was riven.  
But she knew not him coming for terror, she felt not  
her wrong that he wrought her, [Ant. 2.  
When her locks as leaves were shed before his  
breath,  
And she heard not for terror his prayer, though the  
cry was a God's that besought her,  
Blown from lips that strew the world-wide seas  
with death.  
For the heart was molten within her to hear,  
And her knees beneath her were loosened for  
fear,  
And her blood fast bound as a frost-bound water,  
And the soft new bloom of the green earth's  
daughter  
Wind-wasted as blossom of a tree ;  
As the wild God rapt her from earth's breast  
lifted,  
On the strength of the stream of his dark breath  
drifted,

From the bosom of earth as a bride from the mother,  
 With storm for bridesman and wreck for brother.  
 As a cloud that he sheds upon the sea.

Of this hoary-headed woe [Epode.  
 Song made memory long ago ;  
 Now a younger grief to mourn  
 Needs a new song younger born.  
 Who shall teach our tongues to reach  
 What strange height of saddest speech,  
 For the new bride's sake that is given to be  
 A stay to fetter the foot of the sea,  
 Lest it quite spurn down and trample the town,  
 Ere the violets be dead that were plucked for  
 its crown,  
 Or its olive-leaf whiten and wither ?  
 Who shall say of the wind's way  
 That he journeyed yesterday,  
 Or the track of the storm that shall sound to-  
 morrow,  
 If the new be more than the grey-grown sorrow ?  
 For the wind of the green first season was keen,  
 And the blast shall be sharper than blew between  
 That the breath of the sea blows hither.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Old men, grey borderers on the march of death,  
 Tongue-fighters, tough of talk and sinewy speech,  
 Else nerveless, from no crew of such faint folk  
 Whose tongues are stouter than their hands come I  
 To bid not you to battle ; let them strike  
 Whose swords are sharper than your keen-tongued  
 wail,

And ye, sit fast and sorrow ; but what man  
 Of all this land-folk and earth-labouring herd  
 For heart or hand seems foremost, him I call  
 If heart be his to hearken, him bid forth  
 To try if one be in the sun's sight born  
 Of all that grope and grovel on dry ground  
 That may join hands in battle grip for death  
 With them whose seed and strength is of the sea.

## CHORUS

Know thou this much for all thy loud blast blown,  
 We lack not hands to speak with, swords to plead,  
 For proof of peril, not of boisterous breath,  
 Sea-wind and storm of barren mouths that foam  
 And rough rock's edge of menace ; and short space  
 May lesson thy large ignorance and inform  
 This insolence with knowledge if there live  
 Men earth-begotten of no tenderer thews  
 Than knit the great joints of the grim sea's brood  
 With hasps of steel together ; heaven to help,  
 One man shall break, even on their own flood's verge,  
 That iron bulk of battle ; but thine eye  
 That sees it now swell higher than sand or shore  
 Haply shall see not when thine host shall shrink

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Not haply, nay, but surely, shall not thine.

## CHORUS

That lot shall no God give who fights for thee.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Shall Gods bear bit and bridle, fool, of men ?

## CHORUS

Nor them forbid we nor shalt thou constrain.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Yet say'st thou none shall make the good lot mine ?

## CHORUS

Of thy side none, nor moved for fear of thee.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Gods hast thou then to baffle Gods of ours ?

## CHORUS

Nor thine nor mine, but equal-souled are they.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Toward good and ill, then, equal-eyed of soul ?

## CHORUS

Nay, but swift-eyed to note where ill thoughts breed.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Thy shaft word-feathered flies yet far of me.

## CHORUS

Pride knows not, wounded, till the heart be cleft.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

No shaft wounds deep whose wing is plumed with words.

## CHORUS

Lay that to heart, and bid thy tongue learn grace.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

Grace shall thine own crave soon too late of mine.

## CHORUS

Boast thou till then, but I wage words no more.

## ERECHTHEUS

Man, what shrill wind of speech and wrangling air  
 Blows in our ears a summons from thy lips  
 Winged with what message, or what gift or grace  
 Requiring ? none but what his hand may take  
 Here may the foe think hence to reap, nor this  
 Except some doom from Godward yield it him.

## HERALD OF EUMOLPUS

King of this land-folk, by my mouth to thee  
 Thus saith the son of him that shakes thine earth,  
 Eumolpus ; now the stakes of war are set,  
 For land or sea to win by throw and wear ;  
 Choose therefore or to quit thy side and give  
 The palm unfought for to his bloodless hand,  
 Or by that father's sceptre, and the foot  
 Whose tramp far off makes tremble for pure fear  
 Thy soul-struck mother, piercing like a sword  
 The immortal womb that bare thee ; by the waves  
 That no man bridles and that bound thy world,  
 And by the winds and storms of all the sea,  
 He swears to raze from eyeshot of the sun  
 This city named not of his father's name,  
 And wash to deathward down one flood of doom  
 This whole fresh brood of earth yeaned naturally,  
 Green yet and faint in its first blade, unblown  
 With yellow hope of harvest ; so do thou,

Seeing whom thy time is come to meet, for fear  
Yield, or gird up thy force to fight and die.

## ERECHTHEUS

To fight then be it ; for if to die or live,  
No man but only a God knows this much yet  
Seeing us fare forth, who bear but in our hands  
The weapons not the fortunes of our fight ;  
For these now rest as lots that yet undrawn  
Lie in the lap of the unknown hour ; but this  
I know, not thou, whose hollow mouth of storm  
Is but a warlike wind, a sharp salt breath  
That bites and wounds not ; death nor life of mine  
Shall give to death or lordship of strange kings  
The soul of this live city, nor their heel  
Bruise her dear brow discrowned, nor snaffle or goad  
Wound her free mouth or stain her sanguine side  
Yet masterless of man ; so bid thy lord  
Learn ere he weep to learn it, and too late  
Gnash teeth that could not fasten on her flesh,  
And foam his life out in dark froth of blood  
Vain as a wind's waif of the loud-mouthed sea  
Torn from the wave's edge whitening. Tell him this ;  
Though thrice his might were mustered for our  
scathe  
And thicker set with fence of thorn-edged spears  
Than sands are whirled about the wintering beach  
When storms have swoln the rivers, and their blasts  
Have breached the broad sea-banks with stress of  
sea,  
That waves of inland and the main make war  
As men that mix and grapple ; though his ranks  
Were more to number than all wildwood leaves  
The wind waves on the hills of all the world.

Yet should the heart not faint, the head not fall,  
 The breath not fail of Athens. Say, the Gods  
 From lips that have no more on earth to say  
 Have told thee this the last good news or ill  
 That I shall speak in sight of earth and sun  
 Or he shall hear and see them : for the next  
 That ear of his from tongue of mine may take  
 Must be the first word spoken underground  
 From dead to dead in darkness. Hence ; make  
 haste,

Lest war's fleet foot be swifter than thy tongue  
 And I that part not to return again  
 On him that comes not to depart away  
 Be fallen before thee ; for the time is full,  
 And with such mortal hope as knows not fear  
 I go this high last way to the end of all.

## CHORUS

Who shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten  
 them, [Str. 1.]  
 Or seal up the fountains of his tears for shame ?  
 Song nor prayer nor prophecy shall slacken tears nor  
 hasten them,

Till grief be within him as a burnt-out flame ;  
 Till the passion be broken in his breast  
 And the might thereof molten into rest,  
 And the rain of eyes that weep be dry,  
 And the breath be stilled of lips that sigh.

Death at last for all men is a harbour ; yet they flee  
 from it, [Ant. 1.]

Set sails to the storm-wind and again to sea ;  
 Yet for all their labour no whit further shall they be  
 from it,  
 Nor longer but wearier shall their life's work be.

How the veils and the wreaths that should  
cover

[Ant. 5.]

The brows of the bride

Shall be shed by the breath of what lover  
And scattered aside ?

With a blast of the mouth of what bridegroom the  
crowns shall be cast from her hair,

And her head by what altar made humble be left of  
them naked and bare ?

At a shrine unbeloved of a God unbehoden a gift  
shall be given for the land, [Str. 6.]

That its ramparts though shaken with clamour and  
horror of manifold waters may stand :

That the crests of its citadels crowned and its turrets  
that thrust up their heads to the sun

May behold him unblinded with darkness of waves  
overmastering their bulwarks begun.

As a bride shall they bring her, a prey for the bride-  
groom, a flower for the couch of her lord ; [Ant. 6.]

They shall muffle her mouth that she cry not or  
curse them, and cover her eyes from the sword.

They shall fasten her lips as with bit and with bridle,  
and darken the light of her face,

That the soul of the slayer may not falter, his heart  
be not molten, his hand give not grace.

If she weep then, yet may none that hear take  
pity ; [Str. 7.]

If she cry not, none should hearken though she  
cried.

Shall a virgin shield thine head for love, O city,  
With a virgin's blood anointed as for pride ?

Yet we held thee dear and hallowed of her favour,  
[Ant. 7.]

Dear of all men held thy people to her heart ;

Nought she loves the breath of blood, the sanguine  
savour,

Who hath built with us her throne and chosen  
her part.

Bloodless are her works, and sweet [Epode.  
All the ways that feel her feet ;  
From the empire of her eyes  
Light takes life and darkness flies ;  
From the harvest of her hands  
Wealth strikes root in prosperous lands ;  
Wisdom of her word is made ;  
At her strength is strength afraid ;  
From the beam of her bright spear  
War's fleet foot goes back for fear ;  
In her shrine she reared the birth  
Fire-begotten on live earth ;  
Glory from her helm was shed  
On his olive-shadowed head ;  
By no hand but his shall she  
Scourge the storms back of the sea,  
To no fame but his shall give  
Grace, being dead, with hers to live,  
And in double name divine  
Half the godhead of their shrine.

But now with what word, with what woe may we  
meet

The timeless passage of piteous feet,  
Hither that bend to the last way's end  
They shall walk upon earth ?

What song be rolled for a bride black-stoled  
And the mother whose hand of her hand hath hold ?  
For anguish of heart is my soul's strength broken  
And the tongue sealed fast that would fain have  
spoken,

To behold thee, O child of so bitter a birth  
 That we counted so sweet,  
 What way thy steps to what bride-feast tend,  
 What gift he must give that shall wed thee for  
 token  
 If the bridegroom be goodly to greet.

## CHTHONIA

People, old men of my city, lordly wise and hoar of  
 head,  
 I a spouseless bride and crownless but with garlands  
 of the dead  
 From the fruitful light turn silent to my dark un-  
 childed bed.

## CHORUS

Wise of word was he too surely, but with deadlier  
 wisdom wise,  
 First who gave thee name from under earth, no breath  
 from upper skies,  
 When, foredoomed to this day's darkness, their first  
 daylight filled thine eyes..

## PRAXITHEA

Child, my child that wast and art but death's and now  
 no more of mine,  
 Half my heart is cloven with anguish by the sword  
 made sharp for thine,  
 Half exalts its wing for triumph, that I bare thee  
 thus divine.

## CHTHONIA

Though for me the sword's edge thirst that sets no  
point against thy breast,  
Mother, O my mother, where I drank of life and fell  
on rest.  
Thine, not mine, is all the grief that marks this hour  
accurst and blest.

## CHORUS

Sweet thy sleep and sweet the bosom was that gave  
thee sleep and birth ;  
Harder now the breast, and girded with no marriage-  
band for girth,  
Where thine head shall sleep, the namechild of the  
lords of under earth.

## PRAXITHEA

Dark the name and dark the gifts they gave thee,  
child, in childbirth were,  
Sprung from him that rent the womb of earth, a  
bitter seed to bear,  
Born with groanings of the ground that gave him  
way toward heaven's dear air.

## CHTHONIA

Day to day makes answer, first to last, and life to  
death ; but I,  
Born for death's sake, die for life's sake, if indeed this  
be to die,  
This my doom that seals me deathless till the springs  
of time run dry,

## CHORUS

Children shalt thou bear to memory, that to man  
 shalt bring forth none ;  
 Yea, the lordliest that lift eyes and hearts and songs  
 to meet the sun,  
 Names to fire men's ears like music till the round  
 world's race be run.

## PRAXITHEA

I thy mother, named of Gods that wreak revenge and  
 brand with blame,  
 Now for thy love shall be loved as thou, and famous  
 with thy fame,  
 While this city's name on earth shall be for earth her  
 mightiest name.

## CHTHONIA

That I may give this poor girl's blood of mine  
 Scarce yet sun-warmed with summer, this thin life  
 Still green with flowerless growth of seedling days,  
 To build again my city ; that no drop  
 Fallen of these innocent veins on the cold ground  
 But shall help knit the joints of her firm walls  
 To knead the stones together, and make sure  
 The band about her maiden girdlestead  
 Once fastened, and of all men's violent hands  
 Inviolable for ever ; these to me  
 Were no such gifts as crave no thanksgiving,  
 If with one blow dividing the sheer life  
 I might make end, and one pang wind up all  
 And seal mine eyes from sorrow ; for such end  
 The Gods give none they love not ; but my heart,  
 That leaps up lightened of all sloth or fear

To take the sword's point, yet with one thought's  
load

Flags, and falls back, broken of wing, that halts  
Maimed in mid flight for thy sake and borne down,  
Mother, that in the places where I played  
An arm's length from thy bosom and no more  
Shalt find me never, nor thine eye wax glad  
To mix with mine its eyesight and for love  
Laugh without word, filled with sweet light, and speak  
Divine dumb things of the inward spirit and heart,  
Moved silently ; nor hand or lip again  
Touch hand or lip of either, but for mine  
Shall thine meet only shadows of swift night,  
Dreams and dead thoughts of dead things ; and the  
bed

Thou strewedst, a sterile place for all time, strewn  
For my sleep only, with its void sad sheets  
Shall vex thee, and the unfruitful coverlid  
For empty days reproach me dead, that leave  
No profit of my body, but am gone  
As one not worth being born to bear no seed,  
A sapless stock and branchless ; yet thy womb  
Shall want not honour of me, that brought forth  
For all this people freedom, and for earth  
From the unborn city born out of my blood  
To light the face of all men evermore  
Glory ; but lay thou this to thy great heart  
Whereunder in the dark of birth conceived  
Mine unlit life lay girdled with the zone  
That bound thy bridal bosom ; set this thought  
Against all edge of evil as a sword  
To beat back sorrow, that for all the world  
Thou brought'st me forth a saviour, who shall save  
Athens ; for none but I from none but thee

Shall take this death for garland ; and the men  
 Mine unknown children of unsounded years,  
 My sons unrisen shall rise up at thine hand,  
 Sown of thy seed to bring forth seed to thee,  
 And call thee most of all most fruitful found  
 Blessed ; but me too for my barren womb  
 More than my sisters for their children born  
 Shall these give honour, yea in scorn's own place  
 Shall men set love and bring for mockery praise  
 And thanks for curses ; for the dry wild vine  
 Scoffed at and cursed of all men that was I  
 Shall shed them wine to make the world's heart  
 warm,

That all eyes seeing may lighten, and all ears  
 Hear and be kindled ; such a draught to drink  
 Shall be the blood that bids this dust bring forth,  
 The chaliced life here spilt on this mine earth,  
 Mine, my great father's mother ; whom I pray  
 Take me now gently, tenderly take home,  
 And softly lay in his my cold chaste hand  
 Who is called of men by my name, being of Gods  
 Charged only and chosen to bring men under earth,  
 And now must lead and stay me with his staff  
 A silent soul led of a silent God,  
 Toward sightless things led sightless ; and on earth  
 I see now but the shadow of mine end,  
 And this last light of all for me in heaven.

## PRAXITHEA

Farewell I bid thee ; so bid thou not me,  
 Lest the Gods hear and mock us ; yet on these  
 I lay the weight not of this grief, nor cast  
 Ill words for ill deeds back : for if one say

They have done men wrong, what hurt have they to hear,

Or he what help to have said it? surely, child,  
If one among men born might say it and live  
Blameless, none more than I may, who being vexed  
Hold yet my peace; for now through tears enough  
Mine eyes have seen the sun that from this day  
Thine shall see never more; and in the night  
Enough has blown of evil, and mine ears  
With wail enough the winds have filled, and brought  
Too much of cloud from over the sharp sea  
To mar for me the morning; such a blast  
Rent from these wide void arms and helpless breast  
Long since one graft of me disbranched, and bore  
Beyond the wild ways of the unwandered world  
And loud wastes of the thunder-throated sea,  
Springs of the night and openings of the heaven,  
The old garden of the Sun; whence never more  
From west or east shall winds bring back that blow  
From folds of opening heaven or founts of night  
The flower of mine once ravished, born my child  
To bear strange children; nor on wings of theirs  
Shall comfort come back to me, nor their sire  
Breathe help upon my peril, nor his strength  
Raise up my weakness; but of Gods and men  
I drift unsteered on ruin, and the wave  
Darkens my head with imminent height, and hangs  
Dumb, filled too full with thunder that shall leave  
These ears death-deafened when the tide finds tongue  
And all its wrath bears on them; thee, O child.  
I help not, nor am holpen; fain, ah fain,  
More than was ever mother born of man,  
Were I to help thee; fain beyond all prayer,  
Beyond all thought fain to redeem thee, torn

More timeless from me sorrowing than the dream  
That was thy sister ; so shalt thou be too,  
Thou but a vision, shadow-shaped of sleep,  
By grief made out of nothing ; now but once  
I touch, but once more hold thee, one more kiss  
This last time and none other ever more  
Leave on thy lips and leave them. Go ; thou wast  
My heart, my heart's blood, life-blood of my life,  
My child, my nursling : now this breast once thine  
Shall rear again no children ; never now  
Shall any mortal blossom born like thee  
Lie there, nor ever with small silent mouth  
Draw the sweet springs dry for an hour that feed  
The blind blithe life that knows not ; never head  
Rest here to make these cold veins warm, nor eye  
Laugh itself open with the lips that reach  
Lovingly toward a fount more loving ; these  
Death makes as all good lesser things now dead,  
And all the latter hopes that flowered from these  
And fall as these fell fruitless ; no joy more  
Shall man take of thy maidenhood, no tongue  
Praise it ; no good shall eyes get more of thee  
That lightened for thy love's sake. Now, take note,  
Give ear, O all ye people, that my word  
May pierce your hearts through, and the stroke that  
cleaves  
Be fruitful to them ; so shall all that hear  
Grow great at heart with child of thought most high  
And bring forth seed in season ; this my child,  
This flower of this my body, this sweet life,  
This fair live youth I give you, to be slain,  
Spent, shed, poured out, and perish ; take my gift  
And give it death and the under Gods who crave  
So much for that they give ; for this is more.

Much more is this than all we ; for they give  
Freedom, and for a blast, an air of breath,  
A little soul that is not, they give back  
Light for all eyes, cheer for all hearts, and life  
That fills the world's width full of fame and praise  
And mightier love than children's. This they give,  
The grace to make thy country great, and wrest  
From time and death power to take hold on her  
And strength to scathe for ever ; and this gift,  
Is this no more than man's love is or mine,  
Mine and all mothers' ? nay, where that seems more,  
Where one loves life of child, wife, father, friend,  
Son, husband, mother, more than this, even there  
Are all these lives worth nothing, all loves else  
With this love slain and buried, and their tomb  
A thing for shame to spit on ; for what love  
Hath a slave left to love with ? or the heart  
Base-born and bound in bondage fast to fear,  
What should it do to love thee ? what hath he,  
The man that hath no country ? Gods nor men  
Have such to friend, yoked beast-like to base life,  
Vile, fruitless, grovelling at the foot of death,  
Landless and kinless thralls of no man's blood,  
Unchilded and unmothered, abject limbs  
That breed things abject ; but who loves on earth  
Not friend, wife, husband, father, mother, child,  
Nor loves his own life for his own land's sake,  
But only this thing most, more this than all,  
He loves all well and well of all is loved,  
And this love lives for ever. See now, friends,  
My countrymen, my brothers, with what heart  
I give you this that of your hands again  
The Gods require for Athens ; as I give  
So give ye to them what their hearts would have

Who shall give back things better ; yea, and these  
 I take for me to witness, all these Gods,  
 Were their great will more grievous than it is,  
 Not one but three, for this one thin-spun thread  
 A threefold band of children would I give  
 For this land's love's sake ; for whose love to-day  
 I bid thee, child, fare deathward and farewell.

## CHORUS

O wofullest of women, yet of all  
 Happiest, thy word be hallowed ; in all time  
 Thy name shall blossom, and from strange new  
 tongues  
 High things be spoken of thee ; for such grace  
 The Gods have dealt to no man, that on none  
 Have laid so heavy sorrow. From this day  
 Live thou assured of godhead in thy blood,  
 And in thy fate no lowlier than a God  
 In all good things and evil ; such a name  
 Shall be thy child this city's, and thine own  
 Next hers that called it Athens. Go now forth  
 Blest, and grace with thee to the doors of death.

## CHTHONIA

O city, O glory of Athens, O crown of my father's  
 land, farewell.

## CHORUS

For welfare is given her of thee.

## CHTHONIA

O Goddess, be good to thy people, that in them  
 dominion and freedom may dwell.

## CHORUS

Turn from us the strengths of the sea.

## CHTHONIA

Let glory's and theirs be one name in the mouths of  
all nations made glad with the sun.

## CHORUS

For the cloud is blown back with thy breath.

## CHTHONIA

With the long last love of mine eyes I salute thee,  
O land where my days now are done.

## CHORUS

But her life shall be born of thy death.

## CHTHONIA

I put on me the darkness thy shadow, my mother, and  
symbol, O Earth, of my name.

## CHORUS

For thine was her witness from birth.

## CHTHONIA

In thy likeness I come to thee darkling, a daughter  
whose dawn and her even are the same.

## CHORUS

Be thine heart to her gracious, O Earth.

## CHTHONIA

To thine own kind be kindly, for thy son's name's  
sake.

## CHORUS

That sons unborn may praise thee and thy first-born son.

## CHTHONIA

Give me thy sleep, who give thee all my life awake.

## CHORUS

Too swift a sleep, ere half the web of day be spun.

## CHTHONIA

Death brings the shears or ever life wind up the weft.

## CHORUS

Their edge is ground and sharpened ; who shall stay his hand ?

## CHTHONIA

The woof is thin, a small short life, with no thread left.

## CHORUS

Yet hath it strength, stretched out, to shelter all the land.

## CHTHONIA

Too frail a tent for covering, and a screen too strait.

## CHORUS

Yet broad enough for buckler shall thy sweet life be.

## CHTHONIA

A little bolt to bar off battle from the gate.

## CHORUS

A wide sea-wall, that shatters the besieging sea.

## CHTHONIA

I lift up mine eyes from the skirts of the shadow, [*Str.*  
From the border of death to the limits of light ;

O streams and rivers of mountain and meadow

That hallow the last of my sight,  
O father that wast of my mother  
Cephisus, O thou too his brother  
From the bloom of whose banks as a prey  
Winds harried my sister away,  
O crown on the world's head lying  
Too high for its waters to drown,  
Take yet this one word of me dying,  
• O city, O crown.

Though land-wind and sea wind with mouths that  
blow slaughter [*Ani.*

Should gird them to battle against thee again,  
New-born of the blood of a maiden thy daughter,  
The rage of their breath shall be vain.  
For their strength shall be quenched and made  
idle,  
And the foam of their mouths find a bridle,  
And the height of their heads bow down  
At the foot of the towers of the town.  
Be blest and beloved as I love thee  
Of all that shall draw from thee breath  
Be thy life as the sun's is above thee ;  
I go to my death.

## CHORUS

Many loves of many a mood and many a kind [*Str.* 1.  
Fill the life of man, and mould the secret mind ;  
Many days bring many dooms, to loose and bind ;

Sweet is each in season, good the gift it brings,  
 Sweet as change of night and day with altering  
 wings,  
 Night that lulls world-weary day, day that comforts  
 night,  
 Night that fills our eyes with sleep, day that fills with  
 light.

None of all is lovelier, loftier love is none, [Ant. 1.  
 Less is bride's for bridegroom, mother's less for  
 son,

Child, than this that crowns and binds up all in  
 one;

Love of thy sweet light, thy fostering breast and  
 hand,

Mother Earth, and city chosen, and natural land ;  
 Hills that bring the strong streams forth, heights of  
 heavenlier air,

Fields aflower with winds and suns, woods with  
 shadowing hair.

But none of the nations of men shall they liken to  
 thee, [Str. 2.

Whose children true-born and the fruit of thy body  
 are we.

The rest are thy sons but in figure, in word are thy  
 seed ;

We only the flower of thy travail, thy children indeed.

Of thy soil hast thou fashioned our limbs, of thy  
 waters their blood,

And the life of thy springs everlasting is fount of our  
 flood.

No wind oversea blew us hither adrift on thy shore,  
 None sowed us by land in thy womb that conceived  
 us and bore.

But the stroke of the shaft of the sunlight that brought  
us to birth

Pierced only and quickened thy furrows to bear us,  
O Earth.

With the beams of his love wast thou cloven as with  
iron or fire,

And the life in thee yearned for his life, and grew  
great with desire.

And the hunger and thirst to be wounded and healed  
with his dart

Made fruitful the love in thy veins and the depth of  
thine heart.

And the showers out of heaven overflowing and liquid  
with love

Fulfilled thee with child of his godhead as rain from  
above.

Such desire had ye twain of each other, till molten  
in one [Ant. 2.]

Ye might bear and beget of your bodies the fruits of  
the sun.

And the trees in their season brought forth and were  
kindled anew

By the warmth of the moisture of marriage, the child-  
bearing dew.

And the firstlings were fair of the wedlock of heaven  
and of earth ;

All countries were bounteous with blossom and  
burgeon of birth.

Green pastures of grass for all cattle, and life-giving  
corn ;

But here of thy bosom, here only, the man-child was  
born.

All races but one are as aliens engrafted or  
sown,

Strange children and changelings ; but we, O our  
mother, thine own.

Thy nurslings are others, and seedlings they know not  
of whom ;

For these hast thou fostered, but us thou hast borne  
in thy womb.

Who is he of us all, O beloved, that owe thee for birth,  
Who would give not his blood for his birth's sake, O  
mother, O Earth ?

What landsman is he that was fostered and reared of  
thine hand

Who may vaunt him as we may in death though he  
died for the land ?

Well doth she therefore who gives thee in guerdon  
The bloom of the life of thy giving ; *[Epode.]*  
And thy body was bowed by no fruitless burden,  
That bore such fruit of thee living.

For her face was not darkened for fear,  
For her eyelids conceived not a tear,  
Nor a cry from her lips craved pity ;  
But her mouth was a fountain of song,  
And her heart as a citadel strong  
That guards the heart of the city.

#### MESSENGER

High things of strong-souled men that loved their land  
On brass and stone are written, and their deeds  
On high days chanted ; but none graven or sung  
That ever set men's eyes or spirits on fire,  
Athenians, has the sun's height seen, or earth  
Heard in her depth reverberate as from heaven,  
More worth men's praise and good report of Gods  
Than here I bring for record in your ears.

For now being come to the altar, where as priest  
Death ministering should meet her, and his hand  
Seal her sweet eyes asleep, the maiden stood,  
With light in all her face as of a bride  
Smiling, or shine of festal flame by night  
Far flung from towers of triumph ; and her lips  
Trembled with pride in pleasure, that no fear  
Blanched them nor death before his time drank dry  
The blood whose bloom fulfilled them ; for her cheeks  
Lightened, and brighter than a bridal veil  
Her hair enrobed her bosom and enrolled  
From face to feet the body's whole soft length  
As with a cloud sun-saturate ; then she spake  
With maiden tongue words manlike, but her eyes  
Lit mildly like a maiden's : *Countrymen,*  
*With more goodwill and height of happier heart*  
*I give me to you than my mother bare,*  
*And go more gladly this great way to death*  
*Than young men bound to battle.* Then with face  
Turned to the shadowiest part of all the shrine  
And eyes fast set upon the further shade,  
*Take me, dear Gods ;* and as some form had shone  
From the deep hollow shadow, some God's tongue  
Answered, *I bless you that your guardian grace*  
*Gives me to guard this country, takes my blood,*  
*Your child's by name, to heal it.* Then the priest  
Set to the flower-sweet snow of her soft throat  
The sheer knife's edge that severed it, and loosed  
From the fair bondage of so spotless flesh  
So strong a spirit ; and all that girt them round  
Gazing, with souls that hung on that sad stroke,  
Groaned, and kept silence after while a man  
Might count how far the fresh blood crept, and bathed  
How deep the dark robe and the bright shrine's base

Red-rounded with a running ring that grew  
 More large and duskier as the wells that fed  
 Were drained of that pure effluence : but the queen  
 Groaned not nor spake nor wept, but as a dream  
 Floats out of eyes awakening so past forth  
 Ghost-like, a shadow of sorrow, from all sight  
 To the inner court and chamber where she sits  
 Dumb, till word reach her of this whole day's end.

## CHORUS

More hapless born by far [Str.  
 Beneath some wintrier star,  
 One sits in stone among high Lydian snows,  
 The tomb of her own woes :  
 Yet happiest was once of the daughters of Gods, and  
 divine by her sire and her lord,  
 Ere her tongue was a shaft for the hearts of her sons,  
 for the heart of her husband a sword.  
 For she, too great of mind, [Ant.  
 Grown through her good things blind,  
 With godless lips and fire of her own breath  
 Spake all her house to death ;  
 But thou, no mother unmothered, nor kindled in  
 spirit with pride of thy seed,  
 Thou hast hallowed thy child for a blameless blood-  
 offering, and ransomed thy race by thy deed.

## MESSENGER

As flower is grafted on flower, so grief on grief  
 Engraffed brings forth new blossoms of strange tears,  
 Fresh buds and green fruits of an alien pain ;  
 For now flies rumour on a dark wide wing,

Murmuring of woes more than ye knew, most like  
 Hers whom ye hailed most wretched ; for the twain  
 Last left of all this house that wore last night  
 A threefold crown of maidens, and to-day  
 Should let but one fall dead out of the wreath,  
 If mad with grief we know not and sore love  
 For this their sister, or with shame soul-stung  
 To outlive her dead or doubt lest their lives too  
 The Gods require to seal their country safe  
 And bring the oracular doom to perfect end,  
 Have slain themselves, and fallen at the altar-foot  
 Lie by their own hands done to death ; and fear  
 Shakes all the city as winds a wintering tree,  
 And as dead leaves are men's hearts blown about  
 And shrunken with ill thoughts, and flowerless hopes  
 Parched up with presage, lest the piteous blood  
 Shed of these maidens guiltless fall and fix  
 On this land's forehead like a curse that cleaves  
 To the unclean soul's in expiate hunted head  
 Whom his own crime tracks hotlier than a hound  
 To life's veiled end unsleeping ; and this hour  
 Now blackens toward the battle that must close  
 All gates of hope and fear on all their hearts  
 Who tremble toward its issue, knowing not yet  
 If blood may buy them surety, cleanse or soil  
 The helpless hands men raise and reach no stay.

## CHORUS

Ill thoughts breed fear, and fear ill words ; but these  
 The Gods turn from us that have kept their law.

Let us lift up the strength of our hearts in song, [Str. 1.  
 And our souls to the height of the darkling day.  
 If the wind in our eyes blow blood for spray,

Be the spirit that breathes in us life more strong,  
Though the prow reel round and the helm point  
wrong,

And sharp reefs whiten the shoreward way.

For the steersman time sits hidden astern, [Ant. 1.

With dark hand plying the rudder of doom,

And the surf-smoke under it flies like fume

As the blast shears off and the oar-blades  
churn

The foam of our lives that to death return,

Blown back as they break to the gulping gloom.

What cloud upon heaven is arisen, what shadow,  
what sound, [Str. 2.

From the world beyond earth, from the night  
underground,

That scatters from wings un behoden the weight of  
its darkness around ?

For the sense of my spirit is broken, and blinded  
its eye, [Ant. 2.

As the soul of a sick man ready to die,

With fear of the hour that is on me, with dread if an  
end be not nigh.

O Earth, O Gods of the land, have ye heart now to  
see and to hear [Str. 3.

What slays with terror mine eyesight and seals  
mine ear ?

O fountains of streams everlasting, are all ye not  
shrunk up and withered for fear ?

Lo, night is arisen on the noon, and her hounds  
are in quest by day, [Ant. 3.

And the world is fulfilled of the noise of them  
crying for their prey,

And the sun's self stricken in heaven, and cast out of  
his course as a blitid man astray.

From east to west of the south sea-line [Str. 4.  
 Glitters the lightning of spears that shine ;  
 As a storm-cloud swoln that comes up from the skirts  
 of the sea

By the wind for helmsman to shoreward ferried,  
 So black behind them the live storm serried  
 Shakes earth with the tramp of its foot, and the  
 terror to be.

Shall the sea give death whom the land gave  
 birth ? [Ant. 4.

O Earth, fair mother, O sweet live Earth,  
 Hide us again in thy womb from the waves of it,  
 help us or hide.

As a sword is the heart of the God thy  
 brother,  
 But thine as the heart of a new-made mother,  
 To deliver thy sons from his ravin, and rage of his  
 tide.

O strong north wind, the pilot of cloud and rain,  
 [Str. 5.  
 For the gift we gave thee what gift hast thou given  
 us again ?

O God dark-winged, deep-throated, a terror to forth-  
 faring ships by night,  
 What bride-song is this that is blown on the blast  
 of thy breath ?

A gift but of grief to thy kinsmen, a song but of  
 death,  
 For the bride's folk weeping, and woe for her father,  
 who finds thee against him in fight.

Turn back from us, turn thy battle, take heed of  
 our cry ; [Ant. 5.  
 Let thy dread breath sound, and the waters of war  
 be dry ;

Let thy strong wrath shatter the strength of our foes,  
 men, the sword of their strength and the shield ;  
 As vapours in heaven, or as waves or the wrecks  
 of ships,  
 So break thou the ranks of their spears with the  
 breath of thy lips,  
 Till their corpses have covered and clothed as with  
 raiment the face of the sword-ploughed field.  
 O son of the rose-red morning, O God twin-born  
 with the day, [Str. 6.  
 O wind with the young sun waking, and winged  
 for the same wide way,  
 Give up not the house of thy kin to the host thou  
 hast marshalled from northward for prey.  
 From the cold of thy cradle in Thrace, from the  
 mists of the fountains of night, [Ant. 6.  
 From the bride-bed of dawn whence day leaps  
 laughing, on fire for his flight,  
 Come down with their doom in thine hand on the  
 ships thou hast brought up against us to fight.  
 For now not in word but in deed is the harvest of  
 spears begun, [Str. 7.  
 And its clamour outbellows the thunder, its lightning  
 outlightens the sun.  
 From the springs of the morning it thunders and  
 lightens across and afar  
 To the wave where the moonset ends and the fall of  
 the last low star.  
 With a trampling of drenched red hoofs and an earth  
 quake of men that meet,  
 Strong war sets hand to the scythe, and the furrows  
 take fire from his feet.  
 Earth groans from her great rent heart, and the  
 hollows of rocks are afraid,

And the mountains are moved, and the valleys as  
waves in a storm-wind swayed.  
From the roots of the hills to the plain's dim verge  
and the dark loud shore,  
Air shudders with shrill spears crossing, and hurtling  
of wheels that roar.  
As the grinding of teeth in the jaws of a lion that  
foam as they gnash  
Is the shriek of the axles that loosen, the shock of the  
poles that crash.  
The dense manes darken and glitter, the mouths of  
the mad steeds champ,  
Their heads flash blind through the battle, and death's  
foot rings in their tramp.  
For a fourfold host upon earth and in heaven is  
arrayed for the fight,  
Clouds ruining in thunder and armies encountering  
as clouds in the night.  
Mine ears are amazed with the terror of trumpets,  
with darkness mine eyes,  
At the sound of the sea's host charging that deafens  
the roar of the sky's.  
White frontlet is dashed upon frontlet, and horse  
against horse reels hurled,  
And the gorge of the gulfs of the battle is wide for  
the spoil of the world.  
And the meadows are cumbered with shipwreck of  
chariots that founder on land, [Ant. 7.]  
And the horsemen are broken with breach as of  
breakers, and scattered as sand.  
Through the roar and recoil of the charges that  
mingle their cries and confound,  
Like fire are the notes of the trumpets that flash  
through the darkness of sound.

As the swing of the sea churned yellow that sways  
with the wind as it swells  
Is the lift and relapse of the wave of the chargers  
that clash with their bells ;  
And the clang of the sharp shrill brass through the  
burst of the wave as it shocks  
Rings clean as the clear wind's cry through the roar  
of the surge on the rocks :  
And the heads of the steeds in their headgear of war,  
and their corsleted breasts,  
Gleam broad as the brows of the billows that brighten  
the storm with their crests,  
Gleam dread as their bosoms that heave to the ship-  
wrecking wind as they rise,  
Filled full of the terror and thunder of water, that  
slays as it dies.  
So dire is the glare of their foreheads, so fearful the  
fire of their breath,  
And the light of their eyeballs enkindled so bright  
with the lightnings of death ;  
And the foam of their mouths as the sea's when the  
jaws of its gulf are as graves,  
And the ridge of their necks as the wind-shaken mane  
on the ridges of waves :  
And their fetlocks afire as they rear drip thick with a  
dewfall of blood  
As the lips of the rearing breaker with froth of the  
manslaying flood.  
And the whole plain reels and resounds as the fields  
of the sea by night  
When the stroke of the wind falls darkling, and death  
is the seafarer's light.

But thou, fair beauty of heaven, dear face of the day  
nigh dead,

[*Epode.*

What horror hath hidden thy glory, what hand hath  
muffled thine head ?

O sun, with what song shall we call thee, or ward off  
thy wrath by what name,

With what prayer shall we seek to thee, soothe with  
what incense, assuage with what gift,

If thy light be such only as lightens to deathward  
the seaman adrift

With the fire of his house for a beacon, that foemen  
have wasted with flame ?

Arise now, lift up thy light ; give ear to us, put forth  
thine hand,

Reach toward us thy torch of deliverance, a lamp for  
the night of the land.

Thine eye is the light of the living, no lamp for the  
dead ;

O, lift up the light of thine eye on the dark of our  
dread.

Who hath blinded thee ? who hath prevailed on  
thee ? who hath ensnared ?

Who hath broken thy bow, and the shafts for thy  
battle prepared ?

Have they found out a fetter to bind thee, a chain for  
thine arm that was bared ?

Be the name of thy conqueror set forth, and the might  
of thy master declared.

O God, fair God of the morning, O glory of  
day,

What ails thee to cast from thy forehead its  
garland away ?

To pluck from thy temples their chaplet enwreathed  
of the light,

And bind on the brows of thy godhead a frontlet  
of night ?

Thou hast loosened the necks of thine horses, and  
goaded their flanks with affright,  
To the race of a course that we know not on ways  
that are hid from our sight.  
As a wind through the darkness the wheels of their  
chariot are whirled,  
And the light of its passage is night on the face of  
the world.  
And there falls from the wings of thy glory no help  
from on high,  
But a shadow that smites us with fear and desire of  
thine eye.  
For our hearts are as reeds that a wind on the water  
bows down and goes by,  
To behold not thy comfort in heaven that hath left us  
untimely to die.  
But what light is it now leaps forth on the land  
Enkindling the waters and ways of the air  
From thy forehead made bare,  
From the gleam of thy bow-bearing hand ?  
Hast thou set not thy right hand again to the string,  
With the back-bowed horns bent sharp for a spring  
And the barbed shaft drawn,  
Till the shrill steel sing and the tense nerve ring  
That pierces the heart of the dark with dawn,  
O huntsman, O king,  
When the flame of thy face hath twilight in chase  
As a hound hath a blood-mottled fawn ?  
He has glanced into golden the grey sea-strands,  
And the clouds are shot through with the fires of  
his hands,  
And the height of the hollow of heaven that he fills  
As the heart of a strong man is quickened and  
thrills ;

High over the folds of the low-lying lands,  
On the shadowless hills

As a guard on his watchtower he stands.

All earth and all ocean, all depth and all height,  
At the flash of an eyebeam are filled with his might :  
The sea roars backward, the storm drops dumb,  
And silence as dew on the fire of the fight

Falls kind in our ears as his face in our sight  
With presage of peace to come.

Fresh hope in my heart from the ashes of dread  
Leaps clear as a flame from the pyres of the dead,  
That joy out of woe

May arise as the spring out of tempest and snow,  
With the flower-feasted month in her hands rose-red

Borne soft as a babe from the bearing-bed.  
Yet it knows not indeed if a God be friend,  
If rescue may be from the rage of the sea,  
Or the wrath of its lord have end.

For the season is full now of death or of birth,  
To bring forth life, or an end of all ;  
And we know not if anything stand or fall  
That is girdled about with the round sea's girth

As a town with its wall ;  
But thou that art highest of the Gods most high,  
That art lord if we live, that art lord though we die,  
Have heed of the tongues of our terror that cry

For a grace to the children of Earth.

ATHENIAN HERALD

Sons of Athens, heavy-laden with the holy weight of  
years,

Be your hearts as young men's lightened of their  
loathlier load of fears ;

For the wave is sunk whose thunder shoreward shook  
 the shuddering lands,  
 And unbreached of warring waters Athens like a sea-  
 rock stands.

## CHORUS

Well thy word has cheered us, well thy face and  
 glittering eyes, that spake  
 Ere thy tongue spake words of comfort: yet no  
 pause behoves it make  
 Till the whole good hap find utterance that the Gods  
 have given at length.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

All is this, that yet the city stands unforced by  
 stranger strength.

## CHORUS

Sweeter sound might no mouth utter in man's ear  
 than this thy word.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Feed thy soul then full of sweetness till some bitterer  
 note be heard.

## CHORUS

None, if this ring sure, can mar the music fallen from  
 heaven as rain.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

If no fire of sun or star untimely sear the tender  
 grain.

## CHORUS

Fresh the dewfall of thy tidings on our hopes re-  
 flowering lies.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Till a joyless shower and fruitless blight them, raining from thine eyes.

## CHORUS

Bitter springs have barren issues ; these bedew grief's arid sands.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Such thank-offerings ask such altars as expect thy suppliant hands.

## CHORUS

Tears for triumph, wail for welfare, what strange godhead's shrine requires ?

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Death's or victory's be it, a funeral torch feeds all its festal fires.

## CHORUS

Like a star should burn the beacon flaming from our city's head.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Like a balefire should the flame go up that says the king is dead.

## CHORUS

Out of heaven, a wild-haired meteor, shoots this new sign, scattering fear.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Yea, the word has wings of fire that hovered, loth to burn thine ear.

## CHORUS

From thy lips it leapt forth loosened on a shrill and shadowy wing.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

Long they faltered, fain to hide it deep as death that hides the king.

## CHORUS

Dead with him blind hope lies blasted by the lightning of one sword.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

On thy tongue truth wars with error ; no man's edge hath touched thy lord.

## CHORUS

False was thine then, jangling menace like a war-steed's brow-bound bell ?

## ATHENIAN HERALD

False it rang not joy nor sorrow ; but by no man's hand he fell.

## CHORUS

Vainly then good news and evil through so faint a trumpet spake.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

All too long thy soul yet labours, as who sleeping fain would wake,

Waking, fain would fall on sleep again ; the woe thou knowest not yet,

When thou knowest, shall make thy memory thirst and hunger to forget.

## CHORUS

Long my heart has hearkened, hanging on thy  
clamorous ominous cry,  
Fain yet fearful of the knowledge whence it looks to  
live or die ;  
Now to take the perfect presage of thy dark and side-  
long flight  
Comes a surer soothsayer sorrowing, sable-stoled as  
birds of night.

## PRAXITHEA

Man, what thy mother bare thee born to say  
Speak ; for no word yet wavering on thy lip  
Can wound me worse than thought forestalls or fear.

## ATHENIAN HERALD

I have no will to weave too fine or far,  
O queen, the weft of sweet with bitter speech,  
Bright words with darkling ; but the brief truth  
shown  
Shall plead my pardon for a lingering tongue,  
Loth yet to strike hope through the heart and slay.  
The sun's light still was lordly housed in heaven  
When the twain fronts of war encountering smote  
First fire out of the battle ; but not long  
Had the fresh wave of windy fight begun  
Heaving, and all the surge of swords to sway,  
When timeless night laid hold of heaven, and took  
With its great gorge the noon as in a gulf,  
Strangled ; and thicker than the shrill-winged shafts  
Flew the fleet lightnings, held in chase through heaven  
By headlong heat of thunders on their trail  
Loosed as on quest of quarry ; that our host  
Smit with sick presage of some wrathful God

Quailed, but the foe as from one iron throat  
With one great sheer sole thousand-throated cry  
Shook earth, heart-staggered from their shout, and  
clove  
The eyeless hollow of heaven ; and breached there-  
with  
As with an onset of strength-shattering sound  
The rent vault of the roaring noon of night  
From her throned seat of usurpation rang  
Reverberate answer ; such response there pealed  
As though the tide's charge of a storming sea  
Had burst the sky's wall, and made broad a breach  
In the ambient girth and bastion flanked with stars  
Guarding the fortress of the Gods, and all  
Crashed now together on ruin ; and through that cry  
And higher above it ceasing one man's note  
Tore its way like a trumpet : *Charge, make end,*  
*Charge, halt not, strike, rend up their strength by the*  
*roots,*  
*Strike, break them, make your birthright's promise*  
*sure,*  
*Show your hearts harder than the fenced land breeds*  
*And souls breathed in you from no spirit of earth,*  
*Sons of the sea's waves ; and all ears that heard*  
Rang with that fiery cry, that the fine air  
Thereat was fired, and kindling filled the plain  
Full of that fierce and trumpet-quenching breath  
That spake the clarions silent ; no glad song  
For folk to hear that wist how dire a God  
Begat this peril to them, what strong race  
Fathered the sea-born tongue that sang them death,  
Threatening ; so raged through the red foam of fight  
Poseidon's son Eumolpus ; and the war  
Quailed round him coming, and our side bore back,

As a stream thwarted by the wind and sea  
That meet it midway mouth to mouth, and beat  
The flood back of its issue ; but the king  
Shouted against them, crying, *O Father-God,*  
*Source of the God my father, from thine hand*  
*Send me what end seems good now in thy sight,*  
*But death from mine to this man* ; and the word  
Quick on his lips yct like a blast of fire  
Blew them together ; and round its lords that met  
Paused all the reeling battle ; two main waves  
Meeting, one hurled sheer from the sea-wall back  
That shocks it sideways, one right in from sea  
Charging, that full in face takes at one blow  
That whole recoil and ruin, with less fear  
Startle men's eyes late shipwrecked ; for a breath,  
Crest fronting crest hung, wave to wave rose poised,  
Then clashed, breaker to breaker ; cloud with cloud  
In heaven, chariot with chariot closed on earth,  
One fourfold flash and thunder ; yet a breath,  
And with the king's spear through his red heart's  
root  
Driven, like a rock split from its hill-side, fell  
Hurled under his own horsehoofs dead on earth  
The sea-beast that made war on earth from sea,  
Dumb, with no shrill note left of storming song,  
Eumolpus ; and his whole host with one stroke  
Spear-stricken through its dense deep iron heart  
Fell hurtling from us, and in fierce recoil  
Drew seaward as with one wide wail of waves,  
Resorbed with reluctance ; such a groan  
Rose from the fluctuant refluence of its ranks,  
Sucked sullen back and strengthless ; but scarce yet  
The steeds had sprung and wheels had bruised their  
lord

Fallen, when from highest height of the sundering  
heaven

The Father for his brother's son's sake slain  
Sent a sheer shaft of lightning writhen and smote  
Right on his son's son's forehead, that unhelmed  
Shone like the star that shines down storm, and gave  
Light to men's eyes that saw thy lord their king  
Stand and take breath from battle ; then too soon  
Saw sink down as a sunset in sea-mist  
The high bright head that here in van of the earth  
Rose like a headland, and through storm and night  
Took all the sea's wrath on it ; and now dead  
They bring thee back by war-forsaken ways  
The strength called once thy husband, the great  
guard

That was of all men, stay of all men's lives,  
They bear him slain of no man but a God,  
Godlike ; and toward him dead the city's gates  
Fling their arms open mother-like, through him  
Saved ; and the whole clear land is purged of war  
What wilt thou say now of this weal and woe ?

#### PRAXITHEA

I praise the Gods for Athens. O sweet Earth,  
Mother, what joy thy soul has of thy son,  
Thy life of my dead lord, mine own soul knows  
That knows thee godlike ; and what grief should mine.  
What sorrow should my heart have, who behold  
Thee made so heavenlike happy ? This alone  
I only of all these blessed, all thy kind,  
Crave this for blessing to me, that in theirs  
Have but a part thus bitter ; give me too  
Death, and the sight of eyes that meet not mine  
And thee too from no godless heart or tongue

Reproachful, thee too by thy living name,  
 Father divine, merciful God, I call,  
 Spring of my life-springs, fountain of my stream,  
 Pure and poured forth to one great end with thine,  
 Sweet head sublime of triumph and these tears,  
 Cephisus, if thou seest as gladly shed  
 Thy blood in mine as thine own waves are given  
 To do this great land good, to give for love  
 The same lips drink and comfort the same hearts,  
 Do thou then, O my father, white-souled God,  
 To thy most pure earth-hallowing heart eterne  
 Take what thou gavest to be given for these,  
 Take thy child to thee ; for her time is full,  
 For all she hath borne she hath given, seen all she  
     had  
 Flow from her, from her eyes and breasts and hands  
 Flow forth to feed this people ; but be thou,  
 Dear God and gracious to all souls alive,  
 Good to thine own seed also ; let me sleep,  
 Father ; my sleepless darkling day is done,  
 My day of life like night, but slumberless :  
 For all my fresh fair springs, and his that ran  
 In one stream's bed with mine, are all run out  
 Into the deep of death. The Gods have saved  
 Athens ; my blood has bought her at their hand,  
 And ye sit safe ; be glorious and be glad  
 As now for all time always, countrymen,  
 And love my dead for ever ; but me, me,  
 What shall man give for these so good as death ?

## CHORUS

From the cup of my heart I pour through my lips  
     along  
 The mingled wine of a joyful and sorrowful song : [Str. 1.]

Wine sweeter than honey and bitterer than blood that  
is poured

From the chalice of gold, from the point of the two-  
edged sword.

For the city redeemed should joy flow forth as a flood,  
And a dirge make moan for the city polluted with  
blood.

Great praise should the Gods have surely, my  
country, of thee, [Ant. 1.]

Were thy brow but as white as of old for thy sons to  
see,

Were thy hands as bloodless, as blameless thy cheek  
divine;

But a stain on it stands of the life-blood offered for  
thine.

What thanks shall we give that are mixed not and  
marred with dread

For the price that has ransomed thine own with thine  
own child's head?

For a taint there cleaves to the people redeemed  
with blood, [Str. 2.]

And a plague to the blood-red hand.

The rain shall not cleanse it, the dew nor the  
sacred flood

That blesses the glad live land.

In the darkness of earth beneath, in the world with-  
out sun, [Ant. 2.]

The shadows of past things reign;

And a cry goes up from the ghost of an ill deed done,  
And a curse for a virgin slain.

#### ATHENA

Hear, men that mourn, and woman without mate,  
Hearken; ye sick of soul with fear, and thou

Dumb-stricken for thy children ; hear ye too,  
Earth, and the glory of heaven, and winds of the air,  
And the most holy heart of the deep sea,  
Late wrath, now full of quiet ; hear thou, sun,  
Rolled round with the upper fire of rolling heaven  
And all the stars returning ; hills and streams,  
Springs and fresh fountains, day that seest these deeds,  
Night that shalt hide not ; and thou child of mine,  
Child of a maiden, by a maid redeemed,  
Blood-guiltless, though bought back with innocent  
blood,

City mine own ; I Pallas bring thee word,  
I virgin daughter of the most high God  
Give all you charge and lay command on all  
The word I bring be wasted not ; for this  
The Gods have stablished and his soul hath sworn,  
That time nor earth nor changing sons of man  
Nor waves of generations, nor the winds  
Of ages risen and fallen that steer their tides  
Through light and dark of birth and lovelier death  
From storm toward haven inviolable, shall see  
So great a light alive beneath the sun  
As the awless eye of Athens ; all fame else  
Shall be to her fame as a shadow in sleep  
To this wide noon at waking ; men most praised  
In lands most happy for their children found  
Shall hold as highest of honours given of God  
To be but likened to the least of thine,  
Thy least of all, my city ; thine shall be  
The crown of all songs sung, of all deeds done  
Thine the full flower for all time ; in thine hand  
Shall time be like a sceptre, and thine head  
Wear worship for a garland ; nor one leaf  
Shall change or winter cast out of thy crown

Till all flowers wither in the world ; thine eyes  
Shall first in man's flash lightning liberty,  
Thy tongue shall first say freedom ; thy first hand  
Shall loose the thunder terror as a hound  
To hunt from sunset to the springs of the sun  
Kings that rose up out of the populous east  
To make their quarry of thee, and shall strew  
With multitudinous limbs of myriad herds  
The foodless pastures of the sea, and make  
With wrecks immeasurable and unsummed defeat.  
One ruin of all their many-folded flocks  
Ill shepherded from Asia ; by thy side  
Shall fight thy son the north wind, and the sea  
That was thine enemy shall be sworn thy friend  
And hand be struck in hand of his and thine  
To hold faith fast for aye ; with thee, though each  
Make war on other, wind and sea shall keep  
Peace, and take truce as brethren for thy sake  
Leagued with one spirit and single-hearted strength  
To break thy foes in pieces, who shall meet  
The wind's whole soul and might of the main sea  
Full in their face of battle, and become  
A laughter to thee ; like a shower of leaves  
Shall their long galleys rank by staggering rank  
Be dashed adrift on ruin, and in thy sight  
The sea deride them, and that lord of the air  
Who took by violent hand thy child to wife  
With his loud lips bemock them, by his breath  
Swept out of sight of being ; so great a grace  
Shall this day give thee, that makes one in heart  
With mine the deep sea's godhead, and his son  
With him that was thine helmsman, king with king,  
Dead man with dead ; such only names as these  
Shalt thou call royal, take none else or less

To hold of men in honour ; but with me  
 Shall these be worshipped as one God, and mix  
 With mine the might of their mysterious names  
 In one same shrine served singly, thence to keep  
 Perpetual guard on Athens ; time and change,  
 Masters and lords of all men, shall be made  
 To thee that knowest no master and no lord  
 Servants ; the days that lighten heaven and nights  
 That darken shall be ministers of thine  
 To attend upon thy glory, the great years  
 As light-engraven letters of thy name  
 Writ by the sun's hand on the front of the earth  
 For world-beholden witness ; such a gift  
 For one fair chaplet of three lives enwreathed  
 To hang for ever from thy storied shrine,  
 And this thy steersman fallen with tiller in hand  
 To stand for ever at thy ship's helm seen,  
 Shall he that bade their threefold flower be shorn  
 And laid him low that planted, give thee back  
 In sign of sweet land reconciled with sea  
 And heavenlike earth with heaven ; such promise-  
 pledge  
 I daughter without mother born of God  
 To the most woful mother born of man  
 Plight for continual comfort. Hail, and live  
 Beyond all human hap of mortal doom  
 Happy ; for so my sire hath sworn and I.

## PRAXITHEA

O queen Athena, from a heart made whole  
 Take as thou givest us blessing ; never tear  
 Shall stain for shame nor groan untune the song  
 That as a bird shall spread and fold its wings  
 Here in thy praise for ever, and fulfil

The whole world's crowning city crowned with thee  
As the sun's eye fulfils and crowns with sight  
The circling crown of heaven. There is no grief  
Great as the joy to be made one in will  
With him that is the heart and rule of life  
And thee, God born of God ; thy name is ours,  
And thy large grace more great than our desire.

## CHORUS

From the depth of the springs of my spirit a fountain  
is poured of thanksgiving,  
My country, my mother, for thee,  
That thy dead for their death shall have life in thy  
sight and a name everliving  
At heart of thy people to be  
In the darkness of change on the waters of time they  
shall turn from afar  
To the beam of this dawn for a beacon, the light of  
these pyres for a star.  
They shall see thee who love and take comfort, who  
hate thee shall see and take warning,  
Our mother that makest us free ;  
And the sons of thine earth shall have help of the  
Waves that made war on their morning,  
And friendship and fame of the sea.

## NOTES

v. 497 503. Cf. Eurip. Fr. *Erechtheus*, 46-61.

v. 522-530. Id. 32-40.

v. 778. Aesch. *Supp.* 524-6.

v. 983. Soph. Fr. (*Oreithyia*; 555).

ἵπέρ τε πόντον πάντ' ἐπ' ἔσχατα χθονες  
νυκτός τε πηγὰς οὐρανοῦ τ' ἀναπτυχας,  
Φοίβου παλαιὸν κῆπον.

v. 1163. Aesch. Fr. (*Danaides*) 38.

ὅμβρος δ' ἀπ' εὐνάεντος οὐρανοῦ πεσὼν  
ἔκυσε γαῖαν.

v. 1168. Id.

δενδρῶπις ὥρα δ' ἐκ νοτίζοντος νάμαιν  
τέλειος ἐστι.

v. 1749. 'God born of God.' Soph. *An.* 874. θεος τοι: καὶ θεογεννητος.



SONG FOR THE CENTENARY  
OF  
WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

BORN JANUARY 30TH, 1775

DIED SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1864

There is delight in singing, though none hear  
Beside the singer : and there is delight  
In praising, though the praiser sit alone  
And see the praised far off him, far above.

LANDOR.

## DEDICATION

TO MRS. LYNN LINTON

*DAUGHTER in spirit elect and consecrate  
By love and reverence of the Olympian sire  
Whom I too loved and worshipped, seeing so great,  
And found so gracious toward my long desire  
To bid that love in song before his gate  
Sound, and my lute be loyal to his lyre,  
To none save one it now may dedicate  
Song's new burnt-offering on a century's pyre.  
And though the gift be light  
As ashes in men's sight,  
Left by the flame of no ethereau fire,  
Yet, for his worthier sake  
Than words are worthless, take  
This wreath of words ere yet their hour expire :  
So, haply, from some heaven above,  
He, seeing, may set next yours my sacrifice of love.*

*May 24, 1880.*



SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF  
WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

## I

FIVE years beyond an hundred years have seen  
 Their winters, white as faith's and age's hue,  
 Melt, smiling through brief tears that broke between,  
 And hope's young conquering colours reared anew,  
 Since, on the day whose edge for kings made keen  
 Smote sharper once than ever storm-wind blew,  
 A head predestined for the girdling green  
 That laughs at lightning all the seasons through,  
 Nor frost or change can sunder  
 Its crown untouched of thunder,  
 Leaf from least leaf of all its leaves that grew  
 Alone for brows too bold  
 For storm to sear of old,  
 Elect to shine in time's eternal view,  
 Rose on the verge of radiant life  
 Between the winds and sunbeams mingling love with  
 strife.

## 2

The darkling day that gave its bloodred birth  
 To Milton's white republic undefiled  
 That might endure so few fleet years on earth  
 Bore in him likewise as divine a child;

422 SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF

But born not less for crowns of love and mirth,  
    Of palm and myrtle passionate and mild,  
The leaf that girds about with gentler girth  
    The brow steel-bound in battle, and the wild  
        Soft spray that flowers above  
        The flower-soft hair of love ;  
And the white lips of wayworn winter smiled  
    And grew serene as spring's  
        When with stretched clouds like wings  
Or wings like drift of snow-clouds massed and  
    piled  
        The godlike giant, softening, spread  
A shadow of stormy shelter round the new-born  
    head.

3

And o'er it brightening bowed the wild-haired hour,  
    And touched his tongue with honey and with fire,  
And breathed between his lips the note of power  
    That makes of all the winds of heaven a lyre  
Whose strings are stretched from topmost peaks that  
    tower :  
    To softest springs of waters that suspire,  
With sounds too dim to shake the lowliest flower  
    Breathless with hope and dauntless with desire :  
        And bright before his face  
        That Hour became a Grace,  
As in the light of their Athenian quire  
    When the Hours before the sun  
        And Graces were made one,  
Called by sweet Love down from the aerial gyre  
    By one dear name of natural joy,  
To bear on her bright breast from heaven a heaven-  
    born boy.

## 4

Ere light could kiss the little lids in sunder  
Or love could lift them for the sun to smite,  
His fiery birth-star as a sign of wonder  
Had risen, perplexing the presageful night  
With shadow and glory around her sphere and  
under  
And portents prophesying by sound and sight ;  
And half the sound was song and half was thunder,  
And half his life of lightning, half of light :  
And in the soft clenched hand  
Shone like a burning brand  
A shadowy sword for swordless fields of fight,  
Wrought only for such lord  
As so may wield the sword  
That all things ill be put to fear and flight  
Even at the flash and sweep and gleam  
Of one swift stroke beheld but in a shuddering  
dream.

## 5

Like the sun's rays that blind the night's wild beasts  
The sword of song shines as the swordsman  
sings ;  
From the west wind's verge even to the arduous  
east's  
The splendour of the shadow that it flings  
Makes fire and storm in heaven above the feasts  
Of men fulfilled with food of evil things ;  
Strikes dumb the lying and hungering lips of priests,  
Smites dead the slaying and ravening hands of  
kings ;

Turns dark the lamp's hot light,  
 And turns the darkness bright  
 As with the shadow of dawn's reverberate wings ;  
 And far before its way  
 Heaven, yearning toward the day,  
 Shines with its thunder and round its lightning  
 rings ;  
 And never hand yet earlier played  
 With that keen sword whose hilt is cloud, and fire  
 its blade.

## 6

As dropping flakes of honey-heavy dew  
 More soft than slumber's, fell the first note's  
 sound  
 From strings the swift young hand strayed lightlier  
 through  
 Than leaves through calm air wheeling toward the  
 ground  
 Stray down the drifting wind when skies are blue  
 Nor yet the wings of latter winds unbound,  
 Ere winter loosen all the Æolian crew  
 With storm unleashed behind them like a hound.  
 As lightly rose and sank  
 Beside a green-flowered bank  
 The clear first notes his burning boyhood found  
 To sing her sacred praise  
 Who rode her city's ways  
 Clothed with bright hair and with high purpose  
 crowned ;  
 A song of soft presageful breath,  
 Prefiguring all his love and faith in life and death ;

## 7

Who should love two things only and only praise  
 More than all else for ever : even the glory  
 Of goodly beauty in women, whence all days  
 Take light whereby death's self seems transitory ;  
 And loftier love than loveliest eyes can raise,  
 Love that wipes off the miry stains and gory  
 From Time's worn feet, besmirched on bloodred  
 ways,  
 And lightens with his light the night of story ;  
 Love that lifts up from dust  
 Life, and makes darkness just,  
 And purges as with fire of purgatory  
 The dense disastrous air,  
 To burn old falsehood bare  
 And give the wind its ashes heaped and hoary ;  
 Love, that with eyes of ageless youth  
 Sees on the breast of Freedom borne her nursling  
 Truth.

## 8

For at his birth the sistering stars were one  
 That flamed upon it as one fiery star ;  
 Freedom, whose light makes pale the mounting sun,  
 And Song, whose fires are quenched when Free-  
 dom's are.  
 Of all that love not liberty let none  
 Love her that fills our lips with fire from far  
 To mix with winds and seas in unison  
 And sound athwart life's tideless harbour-bar  
 Out where our songs fly free  
 Across time's bounded sea,

A boundless flight beyond the dim sun's car,  
 Till all the spheres of night  
 Chime concord round their flight  
 Too loud for blasts of warring change to mar,  
 From stars that sang for Homer's birth  
 To these that gave our Landor welcome back from  
 earth.

Shine, as above his cradle, on his grave,  
 Stars of our worship, lights of our desire !  
 For never man that heard the world's wind rave  
 To you was truer in trust of heart and lyre :  
 Nor Greece nor England on a brow more brave  
 Beheld your flame against the wind burn higher :  
 Nor all the gusts that blanch life's worldly wave  
 With surf and surge could quench its flawless fire :  
 No blast of all that blow  
 Might bid the torch burn low  
 That lightens on us yet as o'er his pyre,  
 Indomitable of storm,  
 That now no flaws deform  
 Nor thwart winds baffle ere it all aspire,  
 One light of godlike breath and flame,  
 To write on heaven with man's most glorious names  
 his name.

The very dawn was dashed with stormy dew  
 And freaked with fire as when God's hand would  
 mar  
 Palaces reared of tyrants, and the blue  
 Deep heaven was kindled round her thunderous car,

That saw how swift a gathering glory grew  
About him risen, ere clouds could blind or bar  
A splendour strong to burn and burst them through  
And mix in one sheer light things near and far.

First flew before his path  
Light shafts of love and wrath,  
But winged and edged as elder warriors' are ;  
Then rose a light that showed  
Across the midsea road  
From radiant Calpe to revealed Masar  
The way of war and love and fate  
Between the goals of fear and fortune, hope and hate.

## II

Mine own twice banished fathers' harbour-land,  
Their nursing-mother France, the well-beloved,  
By the arduous blast of sanguine sunrise fanned,  
Flamed on him, and his burning lips were moved  
As that live statue's throned on Lybian sand  
When morning moves it, ere her light faith roved  
From promise, and her tyrant's poisonous hand  
Fed hope with Corsic honey till she proved  
More deadly than despair  
And falser even than fair,  
Though fairer than all elder hopes removed  
As landmarks by the crime  
Of inundating time ;  
Light faith by grief too loud too long reproved :  
For even as in some darkling dance  
Wronged love changed hands with hate, and turned  
his heart from France.

But past the snows and summits Pyrenean  
 Love stronger-winged held more prevailing flight  
 That o'er Tyrrhene, Iberian, and Ægean  
 Shores lightened with one storm of sound and  
 light.  
 From earliest even to hoariest years one pæan  
 Rang rapture through the fluctuant roar of fight,  
 From Nestor's tongue in accents Achillean  
 On death's blind verge dominant over night.  
 For voice as hand and hand  
 As voice for one fair land  
 Rose radiant, smote sonorous, past the height  
 Where darkling pines enrobe  
 The steel-cold Lake of Gaube,  
 Deep as dark death and keen as death to smite,  
 To where on peak or moor or plain  
 His heart and song and sword were one to strike for  
 Spain.

Resurgent at his lifted voice and hand  
 Pale in the light of war or treacherous fate  
 Song bade before him all their shadows stand  
 For whom his will unbarred their funeral grate.  
 The father by whose wrong revenged his land  
 Was given for sword and fire to desolate  
 Rose fire-encircled as a burning brand,  
 Great as the woes he wrought and bore were great.  
 Fair as she smiled and died,  
 Death's crowned and breathless bride  
 Smiled as one living even on craft and hate :

And pity, a star unrisen,  
 Scarce lit Ferrante's prison  
 Ere night unnatural closed the natural gate  
 That gave their life and love and light  
 To those fair eyes despoiled by fratricide of sight.

## 14

Tears bright and sweet as fire and incense fell  
 In perfect notes of music-measured pain  
 On veiled sweet heads that heard not love's farewell  
 Sob through the song that bade them rise again ;  
 Rise in the light of living song, to dwell  
 With memories crowned of memory : so the strain  
 Made soft as heaven the stream that girdles hell  
 And sweet the darkness of the breathless plain,  
 And with Elysian flowers  
 Recrowned the wreathless hours  
 That mused and mourned upon their works in vain ;  
 For all their works of death  
 Song filled with light and breath,  
 And listening grief relaxed her lightening chain ;  
 'For sweet as all the wide sweet south  
 She found the song like honey from the lion's mouth.

## 15

High from his throne in heaven Simonides,  
 Crowned with mild aureole of memoriai tears  
 That the everlasting sun of all time sees  
 All golden, molten from the forge of years,  
 Smiled, as the gift was laid upon his knees  
 Of songs that hang like pearls in mourners' ears  
 Mild as the murmuring of Hymettian bees  
 And honied as their harvest, that endears

The toil of flowery days ;  
 And smiling perfect praise  
 Hailed his one brother mateless else of peers :  
 Whom we that hear not him  
 For length of date grown dim  
 Hear, and the heart grows glad of grief that hears ;  
 And harshest heights of sorrowing hours,  
 Like snows of Alpine April, melt from tears to  
 flowers.

## 16

Therefore to him the shadow of death was none,  
 The darkness was not, nor the temporal tomb :  
 And multitudinous time for him was one,  
 Who bade before his equal seat of doom  
 Rise and stand up for judgment in the sun  
 The weavers of the world's large-historied loom,  
 By their own works of light or darkness done  
 Clothed round with light or girt about with gloom  
 In speech of purer gold  
 Than even they spake of old  
 He bade the breath of Sidney's lips relume  
 The fire of thought and love  
 That made his bright life move  
 Through fair brief seasons of benignant bloom  
 To blameless music ever, strong  
 As death and sweet as death-annihilating song.

## 17

Thought gave his wings the width of time to roam,  
 Love gave his thought strength equal to release  
 From bonds of old forgetful years, like foam  
 Vanished, the fame of memories that decrease ;

So strongly faith had fledged for flight from home  
 The soul's large pinions till her strife should cease :  
 And through the trumpet of a child of Rome  
 Rang the pure music of the flutes of Greece.  
 As though some northern hand  
 Reft from the Latin land  
 A spoil more costly than the Colchian fleece  
 To clothe with golden sound  
 Of old joy newly found  
 And rapture as of penetrating peace  
 The naked north-wind's cloudiest clime,  
 And give its darkness light of the old Sicilian time.

## 18

He saw the brand that fired the towers of Troy  
 Fade, and the darkness at Cœnone's prayer  
 Close upon her that closed upon her boy,  
 For all the curse of godhead that she bare ;  
 And the Apollonian serpent gleam and toy  
 With scathless maiden limbs and shuddering hair ;  
 And his love smitten in their dawn of joy  
 Leave Pan the pine-leaf of her change to wear ;  
 And one in flowery coils  
 Caught as in fiery toils  
 Smite Calydon with mourning unaware ;  
 And where her low turf shrine  
 Showed Modesty divine  
 The fairest mother's daughter far more fair  
 Hide on her breast the heavenly shame  
 That kindled once with love should kindle Troy with  
 flame.

Nor less the light of story than of song  
 With graver glories girt his godlike head,  
 Reverted alway from the temporal throng  
 Of lives that live not toward the living dead.  
 The shadows and the splendours of their throng  
 Made bright and dark about his board and bed  
 The lines of life and vision, sweet or strong  
 With sound of lutes or trumpets blown, that led  
 Forth of the ghostly gate  
 Opening in spite of fate  
 Shapes of majestic or tumultuous tread,  
 Divine and direful things,  
 These foul as priests or kings,  
 Those fair as heaven or love or freedom, red  
 With blood and green with palms and white  
 With raiment woven of deeds divine and words of  
 light.

The thunder-fire of Cromwell, and the ray  
 That keeps the place of Phocion's name serene  
 And clears the cloud from Kosciusko's day,  
 Alternate as dark hours with bright between,  
 Met in the heaven of his high thought, which lay  
 For all stars open that all eyes had seen  
 Rise on the night or twilight of the way  
 Where feet of human hopes and fears had been.  
 Again the sovereign word  
 On Milton's lips was heard  
 Living : again the tender three days' queen

Drew bright and gentle breath  
 On the sharp edge of death :  
 And, staged again to show of mortal scene,  
 Tiberius, ere his name grew dire,  
 Wept, stainless yet of empire, tears of blood and fire.

## 21

Most ardent and most awful and most fond,  
 The fervour of his Apollonian eye  
 Yearned upon Hellas, yet enthralled in bond  
 Of time whose years beheld her and past by  
 Silent and shameful, till she rose and donned  
 The casque again of Pallas ; for her cry  
 Forth of the past and future, depths beyond  
 This where the present and its tyrants lie,  
 As one great voice of twain  
 For him had pealed again,  
 Heard but of hearts high as her own was high,  
 High as her own and his  
 And pure as love's heart is,  
 That lives though hope at once and memory die :  
 And with her breath his clarion's blast  
 Was filled as cloud with fire or future souls with past.

## 22

As a wave only obsequious to the wind  
 Leaps to the lifting breeze that bids it leap,  
 Large-hearted, and its thickening mane be thinned  
 By the strong god's breath moving on the deep  
 From utmost Atlas even to extremest Ind  
 That shakes the plain where no men sow nor reap,

So, moved with wrath toward men that ruled and  
sinned

And pity toward all tears he saw men weep,

Arose to take man's part

His loving lion heart,

Kind as the sun's that has in charge to keep

Earth and the seed thereof

Safe in his lordly love,

Strong as sheer truth and soft as very sleep ;

The mightiest heart since Milton's leapt,

The gentlest since the gentlest heart of Shakespeare  
slept.

## 23

Like the wind's own on her divided sea

His song arose on Corinth, and aloud

Recalled her Isthmian song and strife when she

Was thronged with glories as with gods in crowd

And as the wind's own spirit her breath was free

And as the heaven's own heart her soul was proud,

But freer and prouder stood no son than he

Of all she bare before her heart was bowed ;

None higher than he who heard

Medea's keen last word

Transpierce her traitor, and like a rushing cloud

That sundering shows a star

Saw pass her thunderous car

And a face whiter and deadlier than a shroud

That lightened from it, and the brand

Of tender blood that falling seared his suppliant hand.

More fair than all things born and slain of fate,  
More glorious than all births of days and nights.  
He bade the spirit of man regenerate,  
Rekindling, rise and reassume the rights  
That in high seasons of his old estate  
Clothed him and armed with majesties and mights  
Heroic, when the times and hearts were great  
And in the depths of ages rose the heights  
Radiant of high deeds done  
And souls that matched the sun  
For splendour with the lightnings of their lights  
Whence even their uttered names  
Burn like the strong twin flames  
Of song that shakes a throne and steel that smites ;  
As on Thermopylæ when shone  
Leonidas, on Syracuse Timoleon.

Or, sweeter than the breathless buds when spring  
With smiles and tears and kisses bids them breathe,  
Fell with its music from his quiring string  
Fragrance of pine-leaves and odorous heath  
Twined round the lute whereto he sighed to sing  
Of the oak that screened and showed its maid  
beneath,  
Who seeing her bee crawl back with broken wing  
Faded, a fairer flower than all her wreath,  
And paler, though her oak  
Stood scathless of the stroke  
More sharp than edge of axe or wolfish teeth,

That mixed with mortals dead  
 Her own half heavenly head  
 And life incorporate with a sylvan sheath,  
 And left the wild rose and the dove  
 A secret place and sacred from all guests but Love.

## 26

But in the sweet clear fields beyond the river  
 Dividing pain from peace and man from shade  
 He saw the wings that there no longer quiver  
 Sink of the hours whose parting footfalls fade  
 On ears which hear the rustling amaranth shiver  
 With sweeter sound of wind than ever made  
 Music on earth : departing, they deliver  
 The soul that shame or wrath or sorrow swayed ;  
 And round the king of men  
 Clash the clear arms again,  
 Clear of all soil and bright as laurel braid,  
 That rang less high for joy  
 Through the gates fallen of Troy  
 Than here to hail the sacrificial maid,  
 Iphigeneia, when the ford  
 Fast-flowing of sorrows brought her father and their  
 lord.

## 27

And in the clear gulf of the hollow sea  
 He saw light glimmering through the grave green  
 gloom  
 That hardly gave the sun's eye leave to see  
 Cymodameia ; but nor tower nor tomb,  
 No tower on earth, no tomb of waves may be,  
 That may not sometime by diviner doom

Be plain and pervious to the poet ; he  
Bids time stand back from him and fate make room  
For passage of his feet,  
Strong as their own are fleet,  
And yield the prey no years may reassume  
Through all their clamorous track,  
Nor night nor day win back  
Nor give to darkness what his eyes illume  
And his lips bless for ever : he  
Knows what earth knows not, sings truth sung not  
of the sea.

## 28

Before the sentence of a curule chair  
More sacred than the Roman, rose and stood  
To take their several doom the imperial pair  
Diversely born of Venus, and in mood  
Diverse as their one mother, and as fair,  
Though like two stars contrasted, and as good,  
Though different as dark eyes from golden hair ;  
One as that iron planet red like blood  
That bears among the stars  
Fierce witness of her Mars  
In bitter fire by her sweet light subdued ;  
One in the gentler skies  
Sweet as her amorous eyes :  
One proud of worlds and seas and darkness rude  
Composed and conquered ; one content  
With lightnings from loved eyes of lovers lightly  
sent.

And where Alpheus and where Ladon ran  
 Radiant, by many a rushy and rippling cove  
 More known to glance of god than wandering man,  
 He sang the strife of strengths divine that strove,  
 Unequal, one with other, for a span,  
 Who should be friends for ever in heaven above  
 And here on pastoral earth : Arcadian Pan,  
 And the awless lord of kings and shepherds, Love :  
 All the sweet strife and strange  
 With fervid counterchange  
 Till one fierce wail through many a glade and grove  
 Rang, and its breath made shiver  
 The reeds of many a river,  
 And the warm airs waxed wintry that it clove,  
 Keen-edged as ice-retempered brand ;  
 Nor might god's hurt find healing save of godlike  
 hand.

As when the jarring gates of thunder ope  
 Like earthquake felt in heaven, so dire a cry,  
 So fearful and so fierce—" Give the sword scope ! "—  
 Rang from a daughter's lips, darkening the sky  
 To the extreme azure of all its cloudless cope  
 With starless horror : nor the God's own eye  
 Whose doom bade smite, whose ordinance bade  
 hope,  
 Might well endure to see the adulteress die,  
 The husband-slayer fordone  
 By swordstroke of her son,  
 Unutterable, unimaginable on high,

On earth abhorrent, fell  
Beyond all scourge of hell,  
Yet righteous as redemption : Love stood nigh,  
Mute, sister-like, and closer clung  
Than all fierce forms of threatening coil and madden-  
ing tongue.

31

All these things heard and seen and sung of old,  
He heard and saw and sang them. Once again  
Might foot of man tread, eye of man behold  
Things un beheld save of ancient men,  
Ways save by gods untrodden. In his hold  
The staff that stayed through some *Æ*tnean glen  
The steps of the most highest, most awful-souled  
And mightiest-mouthed of singers, even as then  
Became a prophet's rod,  
A lyre on fire of God,  
Being still the staff of exile : yea, as when  
The voice poured forth on us  
Was even of *Æ*schylus,  
And his one word great as the crying of ten,  
Crying in men's ears of wrath toward wrong,  
Of love toward right immortal, sanctified with song.

32

Him too whom none save one before him ever  
Beheld, nor since hath man again beheld,  
Whom Dante seeing him saw not, nor the giver  
Of all gifts back to man by time withholden,  
Shakespeare—him too, whom sea-like ages sever,  
As waves divide men's eyes from lights upholden

440 SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF

To landward, from our songs that find him never,  
Seeking, though memory fire and hope embolden--  
    Him too this one song found,  
    And raised at its sole sound  
Up from the dust of darkling dreams and older  
    Legends forlorn of breath,  
    Up from the deeps of death,  
Ulysses : him whose name turns all songs golden,  
    The wise divine strong soul, whom fate  
Could make no less than change and chance beheld  
    him great.

33

Nor stands the seer who raised him less august  
    Before us, nor in judgment frail and rathe,  
Less constant or less loving or less just,  
    But fruitful-ripe and full of tender faith,  
Holding all high and gentle names in trust  
    Of time for honour ; so his quickening breath  
Called from the darkness of their martyred dust  
    Our sweet Saints Alice and Elizabeth,  
        Revived and reinspired  
        With speech from heavenward fired  
By love to say what Love the Archangel saith  
    Only, nor may such word  
        Save by such ears be heard  
As hear the tongues of angels after death  
    Descending on them like a dove  
Has taken all earthly sense of thought away but  
    love.

All sweet, all sacred, all heroic things,  
 All generous names and loyal, and all wise,  
 With all his heart in all its wayfarings  
 He sought, and worshipped, seeing them with his  
 eyes  
 In very present glory, clothed with wings  
 Of words and deeds and dreams immortal, rise  
 Visible more than living slaves and kings,  
 Audible more than actual vows and lies :  
 These, with scorn's fieriest rod,  
 These and the Lord their God,  
 The Lord their likeness, tyrant of the skies  
 As they Lord Gods of earth,  
 These with a rage of mirth  
 He mocked and scourged and spat on, in such wise  
 That none might stand before his rod,  
 And these being slain the Spirit alone be lord or  
 God.

For of all souls for all time glorious none  
 Loved Freedom better, of all who have loved her  
 best,  
 Than he who wrote that scripture of the sun  
 Writ as with fire and light on heaven's own crest,  
 Of all words heard on earth the noblest one  
 That ever spake for souls and left them blest :  
**GLADLY WE SHOULD REST EVER, HAD WE WON**  
**FREEDOM : WE HAVE LOST, AND VERY GLADLY REST.**  
 O poet hero, lord  
 And father, we record  
 Deep in the burning tablets of the breast

Thankfully those divine  
 And living words of thine  
 For faith and comfort in our hearts imprest  
 With strokes engraven past hurt of years  
 And lines inured with fire of immemorial tears.

## 36

But who being less than thou shall sing of thee  
 Words worthy of more than pity or less than scorn ?  
 Who sing the golden garland woven of three,  
 Thy daughters, Graces mightier than the morn,  
 More godlike than the graven gods men see  
 Made all but all immortal, human born  
 And heavenly natured ? With the first came He,  
 Led by the living hand, who left forlorn  
 Life by his death, and time  
 More by his life sublime  
 Than by the lives of all whom all men mourn,  
 And even for mourning praise  
 Heaven, as for all those days  
 These dead men's lives clothed round with glories  
 worn  
 By memory till all time lie dead,  
 And higher than all behold the bay round Shake-  
 speare's head.

## 37

Then, fairer than the fairest Grace of ours,  
 Came girt with Grecian gold the second Grace,  
 And verier daughter of his most perfect hours  
 Than any of latter time or alien place  
 Named, or with hair inwoven of English flowers  
 Only, nor wearing on her statelier face

The lordlier light of Athens. All the Powers  
That graced and guarded round that holiest race,  
That heavenliest and most high  
Time hath seen live and die,  
Poured all their power upon him to retrace  
The erased immortal roll  
Of Love's most sovereign scroll  
And Wisdom's warm from Freedom's wide embrace,  
The scroll that on Aspasia's knees  
Laid once made manifest the Olympian Pericles.

## 38

Clothed on with tenderest weft of Tuscan air,  
Came laughing like Etrurian spring the third,  
With green Valdelsa's hill-flowers in her hair  
Deep-drenched with May-dews, in her voice the  
bird  
Whose voice hath night and morning in it ; fair  
As the ambient gold of wall-flowers that engird  
The walls engirdling with a circling stair  
My sweet San Gimignano : nor a word  
Fell from her flowerlike mouth  
Not sweet with all the south ;  
As though the dust shrined in Certaldo stirred  
And spake, as o'er it shone  
That bright Pentameron,  
And his own vines again and chestnuts heard  
Boccaccio : nor swift Elsa's chime  
Mixed not her golden babble with Petrarca's rhyme

No lovelier laughed the garden which receives  
 Yet, and yet hides not from our following eyes  
 With soft rose-laurels and low strawberry-leaves,  
 Ternissa, sweet as April-coloured skies,  
 Bowed like a flowering reed when May's wind heaves  
 The reed-bed that the stream kisses and sighs,  
 In love that shrinks and murmurs and believes  
 What yet the wisest of the starriest wise  
 Whom Greece might ever hear  
 Speaks in the gentlest ear  
 That ever heard love's lips philosophize  
 With such deep-reasoning words  
 As blossoms use and birds,  
 Nor heeds Leontion lingering till they rise  
 Far off, in no wise over far,  
 Beneath a heaven all amorous of its first-born star.

What sound, what storm and splendour of what fire,  
 Darkening the light of heaven, lightening the night,  
 Rings, rages, flashes round what ravening pyre  
 That makes time's face pale with its reflex light  
 And leaves on earth, who seeing might scarce respire,  
 A shadow of red remembrance? Right nor might  
 Alternating wore ever shapes more dire  
 Nor manifest in all men's awful sight  
 In form and face that wore  
 Heaven's light and likeness more  
 Than these, or held suspense mens hearts at  
 height

More fearful, since man first  
 Slaked with man's blood his thirst,  
 Than when Rome clashed with Hannibal in fight,  
 Till tower on ruining tower was hurled  
 Where Scipio stood, and Carthage was not in the  
 world.

## 41

Nor lacked there power of purpose in his hand  
 Who carved their several praise in words of gold  
 To bare the brows of conquerors and to brand,  
 Made shelterless of laurels bought and sold  
 For price of blood or incense, dust or sand,  
 Triumph or terror. He that sought of old  
 His father Ammon in a stranger's land,  
 And shrank before the serpentine fold,  
 Stood in our seer's wide eye  
 No higher than man most high,  
 And lowest in heart when highest in hope to hold  
 Fast as a scripture furled  
 The scroll of all the world  
 Sealed with his signet : nor the blind and bold  
 First thief of empire, round whose head  
 Swarmed carrion flies for bees, on flesh for violets fed.<sup>1</sup>

## 42

As fire that kisses, killing with a kiss,  
 He saw the light of death, riotous and red,  
 Flame round the bent brows of Semiramis  
 Re-risen, and mightier, from the Assyrian dead,

<sup>1</sup> Thy lifelong works, Napoleon, who shall write ?  
 Time, in his children's blood who takes delight.

## 446 SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF

Kindling, as dawn a frost-bound precipice,  
The steely snows of Russia, for the tread  
Of feet that felt before them crawl and hiss  
The snaky lines of blood violently shed  
Like living creeping things  
That writhe but have no stings  
To scare adulterers from the imperial bed  
Bowed with its load of lust,  
Or chill the ravenous gust  
That made her body a fire from heel to head ;  
Or change her high bright spirit and clear,  
For all its mortal stains, from taint of fraud or fear.

## 43

As light that blesses, hallowing with a look,  
He saw the godhead in Vittoria's face  
Shine soft on Buonarroti's, till he took,  
Albeit himself God, a more godlike grace,  
A strength more heavenly to confront and brook  
All ill things coiled about his worldly race,  
From the bright scripture of that present book  
Wherin his tired grand eyes got power to trace  
Comfort more sweet than youth,  
And hope whose child was truth,  
And love that brought forth sorrow for a space,  
Only that she might bear  
Joy : these things, written there,  
Made even his soul's high heaven a heavenlier  
place,  
Perused with eyes whose glory and glow  
Had in their fires the spirit of Michael Angelo.

## 44

With balms and dews of blessing he consoled  
The fair fame wounded by the black priest's fang,  
Giovanna's, and washed off her blithe and bold  
Boy-bridegroom's blood, that seemed so long to  
hang  
On her fair hand, even till the stain of old  
Was cleansed with healing song, that after sang  
Sharp truth by sweetest singers' lips untold  
Of pale Beatrice, though her death-note rang  
From other strings divine  
Ere his rekindling line  
With yet more piteous and intolerant pang  
Pierced all men's hearts anew  
That heard her passion through  
Till fierce from throes of fiery pity sprang  
Wrath, armed for chase of monstrous beasts,  
Strong to lay waste the kingdom of the seed of  
priests.

## 45

He knew the high-souled humbleness, the mirth  
And majesty of meanest men born free,  
That made with Luther's or with Hofer's birth  
The whole world worthier of the sun to see :  
The wealth of spirit among the snows, the dearth  
Wherein souls festered by the servile sea  
That saw the lowest of even crowned heads on earth  
Thronged round with worship in Parthenope.  
His hand bade Justice guide  
Her child Tyrannicide,  
Light winged by fire that brings the dawn to be ;

And pierced with Tyrrel's dart  
 Again the riotous heart  
 That mocked at mercy's tongue and manhood's  
 knee :  
 And oped the cell where kinglike death  
 Hung o'er her brows discrowned who bare Elizabeth.

## 46

Toward Spenser or toward Bacon proud or kind  
 He bared the heart of Essex, twain and one,  
 For the base heart that soiled the starry mind  
 Stern, for the father in his child undone  
 Soft as his own toward children, stamped and signed  
 With their sweet image visibly set on  
 As by God's hand, clear as his own designed  
 The likeness radiant out of ages gone  
 That none may now destroy  
 Of that high Roman boy  
 Whom Julius and Cleopatra saw their son  
 True-born of sovereign seed,  
 Foredoomed even thence to bleed,  
 The stately grace of bright Cæsarion,  
 The head unbent, the heart unbowed,  
 That not the shadow of death could make less clear  
 and proud.

## 47

With gracious gods he communed, honouring thus  
 At once by service and similitude,  
 Service devout and worship emulous  
 Of the same golden Muses once they wooed,  
 The names and shades adored of all of us,  
 The nurslings of the brave world's earlier brood,

Grown gods for us themselves : Theocritus  
 First, and more dear Catullus, names bedewed  
     With blessings bright like tears  
     From the old memorial years,  
 And loves and lovely laughers, every mood  
     Sweet as the drops that fell  
     Of their own œnomel  
 From living lips to cheer the multitude  
     That feeds on words divine, and grows  
 More worthy, seeing their world reblossom like a  
     rose.

## 48

Peace, the soft seal of long life's closing story,  
 The silent music that no strange note jars,  
 Crowned not with gentler hand the years that glory  
     Crowned, but could hide not all the spiritual scars  
 Time writes on the inward strengths of warriors  
     hoary  
 With much long warfare, and with gradual bars  
 Blinely pent in : but these, being transitory,  
 Broke, and the power came back that passion  
     mars :  
         And at the lovely last  
         Above all anguish past  
 Before his own the sightless eyes like stars  
     Arose that watched arise  
     Like stars in other skies  
 Above the strife of ships and hurtling cars  
     The Dioscurian songs divine  
 That lighten all the world with lightning of their  
     line.

45<sup>o</sup> SONG FOR THE CENTENARY OF

49

He sang the last of Homer, having sung  
The last of his Ulysses. Bright and wide  
For him time's dark strait ways, like clouds that  
clung  
About the day-star, doubtful to divide,  
Waxed in his spiritual eyeshot, and his tongue  
Spake as his soul bore witness, that desried,  
Like those twin towering lights in darkness hung,  
Homer, and grey Laertes at his side  
Kingly as kings are none  
Beneath a later sun,  
And the sweet maiden ministering in pride  
To sovereign and to sage  
In their more sweet old age :  
These things he sang, himself as old, and died.  
And if death be not, if life be,  
As Homer and as Milton are in heaven is he.

50

Poet whose large-eyed loyalty of love  
Was pure toward all high poets, all their kind  
And all bright words and all sweet works thereof ;  
Strong like the sun, and like the sunlight kind ;  
Heart that no fear but every grief might move  
Wherewith men's hearts were bound of powers  
that bind ;  
The purest soul that ever proof could prove  
From taint of tortuous or of envious mind ;  
Whose eyes elate and clear  
Nor shame nor ever fear  
But only pity or glorious wrath could blind ;

Name set for love apart,  
Held lifelong in my heart,  
Face like a father's toward my face inclined ;  
No gifts like thine are mine to give,  
Who by thine own words only bid thee hail, and  
live.

## NOTES

## STANZA

6. See note to the Imaginary Conversation of Leofric and Godiva for the exquisite first verses extant from the hand of Landor.
10. The Poems of Walter Savage Landor: 1795. Moral Epistle, respectfully dedicated to Earl Stanhope: 1795. Gebir.
13. Count Julian: Ines de Castro: Ippolito di Este.
- 14, 15. Poems "on the Dead."
16. Imaginary Conversations: Lord Brooke and Sir Philip Sidney.
- 17, 18. Idyllia Nova Quinque Heroum atque Heroidum (1815): Corythus; Dryope; Pan et Pitys; Coresus et Callirrhoë; Helena ad Pudoris Aram.
- 19, 20. Imaginary Conversations: Oliver Cromwell and Walter Noble; Æschines and Phocion; Kosciusko and Poniatowski; Milton and Marvell; Roger Ascham and Lady Jane Grey; Tiberius and Vipsania.
- 21, 22, 23. Hellenics: To Corinth.
24. Hellenics: Regeneration.
25. The Hamadryad; Acon and Rhodope.
26. The Shades of Agamemnon and Iphigeneia.
27. Enallos and Cymodameia.
28. The Children of Venus.
29. Cupid and Pan.
30. The Death of Clytemnestra; The Madness of Orestes; The Prayer of Orestes.
32. The Last of Ulysses.
33. Imaginary Conversations: Lady Lisle and Elizabeth Gaunt.
35. *Pro monumento super milites regio jussu interemptos.*

## TANZA

36. The Citation and Examination of William Shakespeare.
37. Pericles and Aspasia.
38. The Pentameron.
39. Imaginary Conversations : Epicurus, Leontion, and Ternissa.
40. Marcellus and Hannibal : P. Scipio Æmilianus, Polybius, and Panætius.
41. Alexander and Priest of Ammon : Bonaparte and the President of the Senate.
42. The Empress Catherine and Princess Dashkoff.
43. Vittoria Colonna and Michel-Angelo Buonarroti.
44. Andrea of Hungary, Giovanna of Naples, Fra Rupert ; a Trilogy : Five Scenes (Beatrice Cenci).
45. Luther's Parents : The Death of Hofer : (*Imaginary Conversations*) Andrew Hofer, Count Metternich, and the Emperor Francis ; Judge Wolfgang and Henry of Melchthal : The Coronation : Tyrannicide (*The Last Fruit off an Old Tree*) : Walter Tyrrel and William Rufus : Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyn.
46. Essex and Spenser (*Imaginary Conversations*) : Essex and Bacon : Antony and Octavius (*Scenes for the Study*).
47. Critical Essays on Theocritus and Catullus.
- 48, 49. Heroic Idyls : Homer, Laertes, and Agatha.

“J'en passe, et des meilleurs.” But who can enumerate all or half our obligations to the illimitable and inexhaustible genius of the great man whose life and whose labour lasted even from the generation of our fathers' fathers to our own? Hardly any reader can feel, I think, so deeply as I feel the inadequacy of my poor praise and too imperfect gratitude to the majestic subject of their attempted expression ; but “such as I had have I given him.”



GRAND CHORUS OF BIRDS  
FROM  
ARISTOPHANES

*Attempted in English verse after the original metre*

I WAS allured into the audacity of this experiment by consideration of a fact which hitherto does not seem to have been taken into consideration by any translator of the half divine humourist in whose incomparable genius the highest qualities of Rabelais were fused and harmonized with the supremest gifts of Shelley: namely, that his marvellous metrical invention of the anapæstic heptameter was almost exactly reproducible in a language to which all variations and combinations of anapæstic, iambic, or trochaic metre are as natural and pliable as all dactylic and spondaic forms of verse are unnatural and abhorrent. As it happens, this highest central interlude of a most adorable masterpiece is as easy to detach from its dramatic setting, and even from its lyrical context, as it was easy to give line for line of it in English. In two metrical points only does my version vary from the verbal pattern of the original. I have of course added rhymes, and double rhymes, as necessary makeweights for the imperfection of an otherwise inadequate language; and equally of course I have not attempted the impossible and undesirable task of reproducing the rare exceptional effect of a line overcharged on purpose with a preponderance of heavy-footed spondees: and this for the obvious reason that even if such a line—which I doubt—could be exactly represented, foot by foot and pause for pause, in English, this English line would no more be a verse in any proper sense of the word than is the line I am writing at this moment. And my main intention, or at least my main desire, in the undertaking of this brief adventure, was to renew as far as possible for English ears the music of this resonant and triumphant metre, which goes ringing at full gallop as of horses who

“dance as 'twere to the music  
Their own hoofs make.”

I would not seem over curious in search of an apt or inapt quotation: but nothing can be fitter than a verse of Shakespeare's to praise at once and to describe the most typical verse of Aristophanes.

## THE BIRDS

(685-723)

COME on then, ye dwellers by nature in darkness, and like to the leaves' generations, That are little of might, that are moulded of mire, unenduring and shadowlike nations, Poor plumeless ephemerals, comfortless mortals, as visions of creatures fast fleeing, Lift up your mind unto us that are deathless, and dateless the date of our being : Us, children of heaven, us, ageless for aye, us, all of whose thoughts are eternal ; That ye may from henceforth, having heard of us all things aright as to matters supernal, Of the being of birds and beginning of gods, and of streams, and the dark beyond reaching, Truthfully knowing aright, in my name bid Prodicus pack with his preaching.

It was Chaos and Night at the first, and the blackness of darkness, and hell's broad border, Earth was not, nor air, neither heaven ; when in depths of the womb of the dark without order First thing first-born of the black-plumed Night was a wind-egg hatched in her bosom, Whence timely with seasons revolving again sweet Love burst out as a blossom,

Gold wings glittering forth of his back, like whirl-winds gustily turning.  
He, after his wedlock with Chaos, whose wings are of darkness, in hell broad-burning,  
For his nestlings begat him the race of us first, and upraised us to light new-lighted.  
And before this was not the race of the gods, until all things by Love were united ;  
And of kind united with kind in communion of nature the sky and the sea are  
Brought forth, and the earth, and the race of the gods everlasting and blest. So that we are  
Far away the most ancient of all things blest. And that we are of Love's generation  
There are manifest manifold signs. We have wings, and with us have the Loves habitation ;  
And manifold fair young folk that forswore love once, ere the bloom of them ended,  
Have the men that pursued and desired them subdued, by the help of us only befriended,  
With such baits as a quail, a flamingo, a goose, or a cock's comb staring and splendid.

All best good things that befall men come from us birds, as is plain to all reason :  
For first we proclaim and make known to them spring, and the winter and autumn in season ;  
Bid sow, when the crane starts clanging for Afric, in shrill-voiced emigrant number,  
And calls to the pilot to hang up his rudder again for the season, and slumber ;  
And then weave cloak for Orestes the thief, lest he strip men of theirs if it freezes.  
And again thereafter the kite reappearing announces a change in the breezes,

And that here is the season for shearing your sheep  
of their spring wool. Then does the swallow  
Give you notice to sell your greatcoat, and provide  
something light for the heat that's to follow.  
Thus are we as Ammon or Delphi unto you, Dodona,  
nay, Phœbus Apollo.  
For, as first ye come all to get auguries of birds, even  
such is in all things your carriage,  
Be the matter a matter of trade, or of earning your  
bread, or of any one's marriage.  
And all things ye lay to the charge of a bird that  
belong to discerning prediction :  
Winged fame is a bird, as you reckon : you sneeze,  
and the sign's as a bird for conviction :  
All tokens are "birds" with you—sounds too, and  
lackeys, and donkeys. Then must it not follow  
That we ARE to you all as the manifest godhead that  
speaks in prophetic Apollo ?

*October 19, 1880.*

## OFF SHORE

WHEN the might of the summer  
 Is most on the sea ;  
 When the days overcome her  
 With joy but to be,  
 With rapture of royal enchantment, and sorcery that  
 sets her not free,

But for hours upon hours  
 As a thrall she remains  
 Spell-bound as with flowers  
 And content in their chains,  
 And her loud steeds fret not, and lift not a lock of  
 their deep white manes ;

Then only, far under  
 In the depths of her hold,  
 Some gleam of its wonder  
 Man's eye may behold,  
 Its wild-weed forests of crimson and russet and olive  
 and gold.

Still deeper and dimmer  
 And goodlier they glow  
 For the eyes of the swimmer  
 Who scans them below  
 As he crosses the zone of their flowerage that knows  
 not of sunshine and snow.

Soft blossomless frondage  
And foliage that gleams  
As to prisoners in bondage  
The light of their dreams,

The desire of a dawn unbeholden, with hope on the  
wings of its beams.

Not as prisoners entombed  
Waxen haggard and wizen,  
But consoled and illumed  
In the depths of their prison

With delight of the light everlasting and vision of  
dawn on them risen,

From the banks and the beds  
Of the waters divine  
They lift up their heads  
And the flowers of them shine

Through the splendour of darkness that clothes them  
of water that glimmers like wine.

Bright bank over bank  
Making glorious the gloom,  
Soft rank upon rank,  
Strange bloom after bloom,

They kindle the liquid low twilight, the dusk of the  
dim sea's womb.

Through the subtle and tangible  
Gloom without form,  
Their branches, infrangible  
Ever of storm,

Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of the  
woodland when April is warm.

## OFF SHORE

As the flight of the thunder, full  
 Charged with its word,  
 Dividing the wonderful  
 Depths like a bird,  
 Speaks wrath and delight to the heart of the night  
 that exults to have heard,

So swiftly, though soundless  
 In silence's ear,  
 Light, winged from the boundless  
 Blue depths full of cheer,  
 Speaks joy to the heart of the waters that part not  
 before him, but hear.

Light, perfect and visible  
 Godhead of God,  
 God indivisible,  
 Lifts but his rod,  
 And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and dark-  
 ness is light at his nod.

At the touch of his wand,  
 At the nod of his head  
 From the spaces beyond  
 Where the dawn hath her bed,  
 Earth, water, and air are transfigured, and rise as  
 one risen from the dead.

He puts forth his hand,  
 And the mountains are thrilled  
 To the heart as they stand  
 In his presence, fulfilled  
 With his glory that utters his grace upon earth, and  
 her sorrows are stilled.

The moan of her travail  
 That groans for the light  
 Till dayspring unravel  
 The weft of the night,

At the sound of the strings of the music of morning,  
 falls dumb with delight.

He gives forth his word,  
 And the word that he saith,  
 Ere well it be heard,  
 Strikes darkness to death ;

For the thought of his heart is the sunrise, and dawn  
 as the sound of his breath.

And the strength of its pulses  
 That passion makes proud  
 Confounds and convulses  
 The depths of the cloud

Of the darkness that heaven was engirt with, divided,  
 and rent as a shroud,

As the veil of the shrine  
 Of the temple of old  
 When darkness divine  
 Over noonday was rolled ;

So the heart of the night by the pulse of the light is  
 convulsed and controlled.

And the sea's heart, groaning  
 For glories withdrawn,  
 And the waves' mouths, moaning  
 All night for the dawn,

Are uplift as the hearts and the mouths of the singers •  
 on leaside and lawn.

## OFF SHORE

And the sound of the quiring  
 Of all these as one,  
 Desired and desiring  
 Till dawn's will be done,  
 Fills full with delight of them heaven till it burns as  
 the heart of the sun.

Till the waves too inherit  
 And waters take part  
 In the sense of the spirit  
 That breathes from his heart,  
 And are kindled with music as fire when the lips of  
 the morning part,

With music unheard  
 In the light of her lips,  
 In the life-giving word  
 Of the dewfall that drips  
 On the grasses of earth, and the wind that enkindles  
 the wings of the ships.

White glories of wings  
 As of seafaring birds  
 That flock from the springs  
 Of the sunrise in herds  
 With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at  
 the change of his words.

At the watchword's change  
 When the wind's note shifts,  
 And the skies grow strange,  
 And the white squall drifts  
 • Up sharp from the sea-line, vexing the sea till the  
 low cloud lifts.

At the charge of his word  
 Bidding pause, bidding haste,  
 When the ranks are stirred  
 And the lines displaced,  
 They scatter as wild swans parting adrift on the wan  
 green waste.

At the hush of his word  
 In a pause of his breath  
 When the waters have heard  
 His will that he saith,  
 They stand as a flock penned close in its fold for  
 division of death.

As a flock by division  
 Of death to be thinned,  
 As the shades in a vision  
 Of spirits that sinned ;  
 So glimmer their shrouds and their sheetings as  
 clouds on the stream of the wind.

But the sun stands fast,  
 And the sea burns bright,  
 And the flight of them past  
 Is no more than the flight  
 Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and  
 afloat in the light.

Like flowers upon flowers  
 In a festival way  
 When hours after hours  
 Shed grace on the day,  
 White blossomlike butterflies hover and gleam  
 through the snows of the spray.

## OFF SHORE

Like snow-coloured petals  
 Of blossoms that flee  
 From storm that unsettles  
 The flower as the tree

They flutter, a legion of flowers on the wing, through  
 the field of the sea.

Through the furrowless field  
 Where the foam-blossoms blow  
 And the secrets are sealed  
 Of their harvest below

They float in the path of the sunbeams, as flakes or  
 as blossoms of snow.

Till the sea's ways darken,  
 And the God, withdrawn,  
 Give ear not or hearken  
 If prayer on him fawn,

And the sun's self seem but a shadow, the noon as a  
 ghost of the dawn.

No shadow, but rather  
 God, father of song,  
 Show grace to me, Father  
 God, loved of me long,

That I lose not the light of thy face, that my trust in  
 thee work me not wrong.

While yet I make forward  
 With face toward thee  
 Not turned yet in shoreward,  
 Be thine upon me;

Be thy light on my forehead or ever I turn it again  
 from the sea.

As a kiss on my brow  
 Be the light of thy grace,  
 Be thy glance on me now  
 From the pride of thy place :  
 As the sign of a sire to a son be the light on my face  
 of thy face.

Thou wast father of olden  
 Times hailed and adored,  
 And the sense of thy golden  
 Great harp's monochord  
 Was the joy in the soul of the singers that hailed  
 thee for master and lord.

Fair father of all  
 In thy ways that have trod,  
 That have risen at thy call,  
 That have thrilled at thy nod,  
 Arise, shine, lighten upon me, O sun that we see to  
 be God.

As my soul has been dutiful  
 Only to thee,  
 O God most beautiful,  
 Lighten thou me,  
 As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids  
 uplift from the sea.

Be praised and adored of us  
 All in accord,  
 Father and lord of us  
 Alway adored,  
 The slayer and the stayer and the harper, the light  
 of us all and our lord.

At the sound of thy lyre,  
At the touch of thy rod,  
Air quickens to fire  
By the foot of thee trod,  
The saviour and healer and singer, the living and  
visible God.

The years are before thee  
As shadows of thee,  
As men that adore thee,  
As cloudlets that flee :  
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven,  
and thy shrine is the sea.

## AFTER NINE YEARS

TO JOSEPH MAZZINI

*Primi& dicte mihi, summ& dicende Camen&*

## I

THE shadows fallen of years are nine  
 Since heaven grew seven times more divine  
 With thy soul entering, and the dearth  
 Of souls on earth  
 Grew sevenfold sadder, wanting One  
 Whose light of life, quenched here and done,  
 Burns there eternal as the sun.

## 2

Beyond all word, beyond all deed,  
 Beyond all thought beloved, what need  
 Has death or love that speech should be,  
 Hast thou of me ?  
 I had no word, no prayer, no cry,  
 To praise or hail or mourn thee by,  
 As when thou too wast man as I,

## 3

Nay, never, nor as any born  
 Save one whose name priests turn to scorn,  
 Who haply, though we know not now,  
 Was man as thou,  
 A wanderer branded with men's blame,  
 Loved past man's utterance : yea, the same,  
 Perchance, and as his name thy name.

## 4

Thou wast as very Christ—not he  
 Degraded into Deity,  
 And priest-polluted by such prayer  
 As poisons air,  
 Tongue-worship of the tongue that slays,  
 False faith and parricidal praise :  
 But the man crowned with suffering days.

## 5

God only, being of all mankind  
 Most manlike, of most equal mind  
 And heart most perfect, more than can  
 Be heart of man  
 Once in ten ages, born to be  
 As haply Christ was, and as we  
 Knew surely, seeing, and worshipped thee.

## 6

To know thee—this at least was ours,  
 God, clothed upon with human hours,  
 O face beloved, O spirit adored,  
 Saviour and lord !

That wast not only for thine own  
Redeemer—not of these alone  
But all to whom thy word was known.

## 7

Ten years have wrought their will with me  
Since last my words took wing for thee  
Who then wast even as now above  
Me, and my love.  
As then thou knewest not scorn, so now  
With that beloved benignant brow  
Take these of him whose light wast thou.

## FOR A PORTRAIT OF FELICE ORSINI

STEADFAST as sorrow, fiery sad, and sweet  
With underthoughts of love and faith, more  
strong  
Than doubt and hate and all ill thoughts which  
throng,  
Haply, round hope's or fear's world-wandering feet  
That find no rest from wandering till they meet  
Death, bearing palms in hand and crowns of song ;  
His face, who thought to vanquish wrong with  
wrong,  
Erring, and make rage and redemption greet,  
Havoc and freedom ; weaving in one west  
Good with his right hand, evil with his left ;  
But all a hero lived and erred and died ;  
Looked thus upon the living world he left  
So bravely that with pity less than pride  
Men hail him Patriot and Tyrannicide.

## EVENING ON THE BROADS

OVER two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in  
peril,  
Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute  
light,  
Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awhile on the  
sterile  
Waves and wastes of the land, half reposessed by  
the night.  
Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and afar in the  
breathless  
Twilight : yonder the depths darken afar and  
asleep.  
Slowly the semblance of death out of heaven descends  
on the deathless  
Waters : hardly the light lives on the face of the  
deep—  
Hardly, but here for awhile. All over the grey soft  
shallow  
Hover the colours and clouds of the twilight, void  
of a star.  
As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged night, whose  
winglets are callow  
Yet, but soon with their plumes will she cover her  
brood from afar,

Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber the skies  
with their blossom  
Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed spring is  
encumbered with flowers.  
World upon world is enwound in the bountiful girth  
of her bosom,  
Warm and lustrous with life lovely to look on as  
ours.  
Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt that dis-  
sembles  
Still with itself, being sick of division and dimmed  
by dismay—  
Nay, not so ; but with love and delight beyond  
passion it trembles,  
Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with love of  
the day :  
Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto death, and  
begotten  
Out of the womb of the tomb, born of the seed of  
the grave :  
Lovely with shadows of loves that are only not  
wholly forgotten,  
Only not wholly suppressed by the dark as a wreck  
by the wave.  
Still there linger the loves of the morning and noon,  
in a vision  
Blindly beheld, but in vain : ghosts that are tired,  
and would rest.  
But the glories beloved of the night rise all too dense  
for division,  
Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered as doves  
in a nest.  
Fainter the beams of the loves of the daylight season  
enkindled

Wane, and the memories of hours that were fair  
with the love of them fade :  
Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset stricken and  
dwindled,  
Gather the signs of the love at the heart of the  
night new-made.  
New-made night, new-born of the sunset, immeasur-  
able, endless,  
Opens the secret of love hid from of old in her heart,  
In the deep sweet heart full-charged with faultless  
love of the friendless  
Spirits of men that are eased when the wheels of  
the sun depart.  
Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the waters  
upholden  
Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly for ever  
away—  
Nay, not so, but at least for a little, awhile at the  
golden  
Limit of arching air fain for an hour to delay.  
Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep yet aslope  
to the gleaming  
Waste of the water without, waste of the water  
within,  
Lights overhead and lights underneath seem doubt-  
fully dreaming  
Whether the day be done, whether the night may  
begin.  
Far and afar and farther again they falter and hover,  
Warm on the water and deep in the sky and pale  
on the cloud :  
Colder again and slowly remoter, afraid to recover  
Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems, from the  
skirt of the shroud.

Faintly the heartbeats shorten and pause of the light  
in the westward

Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of star  
upon star

Hurried and eager of life as a child that strains to  
the breast-ward

Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps where the  
ways of them are,

Glad of the glory of the gift of their life and the  
wealth of its wonder,

Fain of the night and the sea and the sweet wan  
face of the earth.

Over them air grows deeper, intense with delight in  
them : under

Things are thrilled in their sleep as with sense of  
a sure new birth.

But here by the sand-bank watching, with eyes on  
the sea-line, stranger

Grows to me also the weight of the sea-ridge  
gazed on of me,

Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless, void  
though of danger

Void not of menace, but full of the might of the  
dense dull sea.

Like as the wave is before me, behind is the bank  
deep-drifted ;

Yellow and thick as the bank is behind me in front  
is the wave.

As the wall of a prison imprisoning the mere is the  
girth of it lifted :

But the rampire of water in front is erect as the  
wall of a grave.

And the crests of it crumble and topple and change,  
but the wall is not broken :

Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher than my head,  
Moving inland alway again, reared up as in token  
    Still of impending wrath still in the foam of it shed.  
And even in the pauses between them, dividing the rollers in sunder,  
    High overhead seems ever the sea-line fixed as a mark,  
And the shore where I stand as a valley behoden of hills whence thunder  
    Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening the depths of the dark.  
Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, upward from under  
    Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after it here from the shore :  
A wall of turbid water, aslope to the wide sky's wonder  
    Of colour and cloud, it climbs, or spreads as a slanted floor.  
And the large lights change on the face of the mere like things that were living,  
    Winged and wonderful, beams like as birds are that pass and are free :  
But the light is dense as darkness, a gift withheld in the giving,  
    That lies as dead on the fierce dull face of the landward sea.  
Stained and stifled and soiled, made earthier than earth is and duller,  
    Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a thing put away :  
No transparent rapture, a molten music of colour ;  
    No translucent love taken and given of the day.

Fettered and marred and begrimed is the light's live  
self on her falling,  
As the light of a man's life lighted the fume of a  
dungeon mars :  
Only she knows of the wind, when her wrath gives  
ear to him calling ;  
The delight of the light she knows not, nor answers  
the sun or the stars.  
Love she hath none to return for the luminous love  
of their giving :  
None to reflect from the bitter and shallow response  
of her heart.  
Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself seems dead  
and not living,  
Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with trouble  
that will not depart.  
In the sound of her speech to the darkness the moan  
of her evil remorse is,  
Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the dog-toothed  
sea-bank's fang  
And trampled to death by the rage of the feet of her  
foam-lipped horses  
Whose manes are yellow as plague, and as ensigns  
of pestilence hang,  
That wave in the foul faint air of the breath of a  
death-stricken city ;  
So menacing heaves she the manes of her rollers  
knotted with sand,  
Discoloured, opaque, suspended in sign as of strength  
without pity,  
That shake with flameless thunder the low long  
length of the strand.  
Here, 'far off in the farther extreme of the shore as it  
lengthens

Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a village  
begin,  
On the lapsing land that recedes as the growth of  
the strong sea strengthens  
Shoreward, thrusting further and further its out-  
works in,  
Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of her kin  
forsaken,  
Lay in her golden raiment alone on the wild wave's  
edge,  
Surely by no shore else, but here on the bank storm-  
shaken,  
Perdita, bright as a dew-drop engilt of the sun on  
the sedge.  
Here on a shore un beheld of his eyes in a dream he  
beheld her  
Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a far-off  
king :  
And over the babe-flower gently the head of a pastoral  
elder  
Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the hawthorn-  
blossom in spring,  
And kind as harvest in autumn : a shelter of shade  
on the lonely  
Shelterless unknown shore scourged of implacable  
waves :  
Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in his  
kingdom, and only  
Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph that  
conquers and craves.  
All these waters and wastes are his empire of old,  
and awaken  
From barren and stagnant slumber at only the  
sound of his breath :

Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in his heart,  
    nor the goal overtaken  
    That his wide wings yearn for and labour as hearts  
        that yearn after death.

All the solitude sighs and expects with a blind ex-  
    pectation  
    Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart, grown  
        heartsick of strife :  
Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and moans,  
    and the vast ululation  
    Takes wing with the clouds on the waters, and  
        wails to be quit of its life.

For the spirit and soul of the waste is the wind, and  
    his wings with their waving  
    Darken and lighten the darkness and light of it  
        thickened or thinned ;

But the heart that impels them is even as a conqueror's  
    insatiably craving  
    That victory can fill not, as power cannot satiate  
        the want of the wind.

All these moorlands and marshes are full of his might,  
    and oppose not  
    Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest or preci-  
        pice piled :

But the will of the wind works ever as his that desires  
    what he knows not,  
    And the wail of his want unfulfilled is as one  
        making moan for her child.

And the cry of his triumph is even as the crying of  
    hunger that maddens  
    The heart of a strong man aching in vain as the  
        wind's heart aches

And the sadness itself of the land for its infinite  
    solitude saddens

More for the sound than the silence athirst for the  
sound that slakes.  
And the sunset at last and the twilight are dead :  
and the darkness is breathless  
With fear of the wind's breath rising that seems  
and seems not to sleep :  
But a sense of the sound of it alway, a spirit un-  
sleeping and deathless,  
Ghost or God, evermore moves on the face of the  
deep.

## THE EMPEROR'S PROGRESS

## A STUDY IN THREE STAGES

(On the Busts of Nero in the Uffizj.)

## I

A CHILD of brighter than the morning's birth  
 And lovelier than all smiles that may be smiled  
 Save only of little children undefiled,  
 Sweet, perfect, witless of their own dear worth,  
 Live rose of love, mute melody of mirth,  
 Glad as a bird is when the woods are mild,  
 Adorable as is nothing save a child,  
 Hails with wide eyes and lips his life on earth,  
 His lovely life with all its heaven to be.  
 And whoso reads the name inscribed or hears  
 Feels his own heart a frozen well of tears,  
 Child, for deep dread and fearful pity of thee  
 Whom God would not let rather die than see  
 The incumbent horror of impending years.

## II

Man, that wast godlike being a child, and now,  
 No less than kinglike, art no more in sooth  
 For all thy grace and lordliness of youth,  
 The crown that bids men's branded foreheads bow

Much more has branded and bowed down thy brow  
 And gnawn upon it as with fire or tooth  
 Of steel or snake so sorely, that the truth  
 Seems here to bear false witness. Is it thou,  
 Child? and is all the summer of all thy spring  
 This? are the smiles that drew men's kisses down  
 All faded and transfigured to the frown  
 That grieves thy face? Art thou this weary thing?  
 Then is no slave's load heavier than a crown  
 And such a thrall no bondman as a king.

## III

Misery, beyond all men's most miserable,  
 Absolute, whole, defiant of defence,  
 Inevitable, inexplicable, intense,  
 More vast than heaven is high, more deep than hell,  
 Past cure or charm of solace or of spell,  
 Possesses and pervades the spirit and sense  
 Whereto the expanse of the earth pays tribute;  
 whence  
 Breeds evil only, and broods on fumes that swell  
 Rank from the blood of brother and mother and  
 wife.  
 "Misery of miseries, all is misery," saith  
 The heavy fair-faced hateful head, at strife  
 With its own lusts that burn with feverous breath  
 Lips which the loathsome bitterness of life  
 Leaves fearful of the bitterness of death.

## THE RESURRECTION OF ALCILIA

(Gratefully inscribed to Dr. A. B. Grosart.)

SWEET song-flower of the Mayspring of our song,  
Be welcome to us, with loving thanks and praise  
To his good hand who travelling on strange ways  
Found thee forlorn and fragrant, lain along  
Beneath dead leaves that many a winter's wrong  
Had rained and heaped through nigh three centuries'  
maze  
Above thy Maybloom, hiding from our gaze  
The life that in thy leaves lay sweet and strong.  
For thine have life, while many above thine head  
Piled by the wind lie blossomless and dead.  
So now disburdened of such load above  
That lay as death's own dust upon thee shed  
By days too deaf to hear thee like a dove  
Murmuring, we hear thee. bird and flower of love.

## THE FOURTEENTH OF JULY

(On the refusal by the French Senate of the plenary amnesty demanded by Victor Hugo, in his speech of July 3rd, for the surviving exiles of the Commune.)

Thou shouldst have risen as never dawn yet rose,  
Day of the sunrise of the soul of France,  
Dawn of the whole world's morning, when the  
trance  
Of all the world had end, and all its woes  
Respite, prophetic of their perfect close.  
Light of all tribes of men, all names and clans,  
Dawn of the whole world's morning and of man's,  
Flower of the heart of morning's mystic rose,  
Dawn of the very dawn of very day,  
When the sun brighter breaks night's ruinous  
prison,  
Thou shouldst have risen as yet no dawn has risen,  
Evoked of him whose word puts night away,  
Our father, at the music of whose word  
Exile had ended, and the world had heard.

*July 5, 1880.*



# THE LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA

Malâ soluta navis exit alite,

HOR.

Rigged with curses dark.

MILTON.

## THE LAUNCH OF THE LIVADIA

## I

GOLD, and fair marbles, and again more gold,  
 And space of halls afloat that glance and gleam  
 Like the green heights of sunset heaven, or seem  
 The golden steeps of sunrise red and cold  
 On deserts where dark exile keeps the fold  
 Fast of the flocks of torment, where no beam  
 Falls of kind light or comfort save in dream,  
 These we far off behold not, who behold  
 The cordage woven of curses, and the decks  
 With mortal hate and mortal peril paven ;  
 From stem to stern the lines of doom engraven  
 That mark for sure inevitable wrecks  
 Those sails predestinate, though no storm vex,  
 To miss on earth and find in hell their haven.

## II

All curses be about her, and all ill  
 Go with her ; heaven be dark above her way,  
 The gulf beneath her glad and sure of prey,  
 And, wheresoe'er her prow be pointed, still  
 The winds of heaven have all one evil will  
 Conspirant even as hearts of kings to slay  
 With mouths of kings to lie and smile and pray,  
 And chiefliest his whose wintrier breath makes chill

With more than winter's and more poisonous cold  
The horror of his kingdom toward the north,  
The deserts of his kingdom toward the east.  
And though death hide not in her direful hold  
Be all stars adverse toward her that come forth  
Nightly, by day all hours till all have ceased :

## III

Till all have ceased for ever, and the sum  
Be summed of all the sumless curses told  
Out on his head by all dark seasons rolled  
Over its cursed and crowned existence, dumb  
And blind and stark as though the snows made numb  
All sense within it, and all conscience cold,  
That hangs round hearts of less imperial mould  
Like a snake feeding till their doomsday come.  
O heart fast bound of frozen poison, be  
All nature's as all true men's hearts to thee,  
A two-edged sword of judgment ; hope be far  
And fear at hand for pilot oversea  
With death for compass and despair for star,  
And the white foam a shroud for the White Czar

*September 30, 1880.*

## SIX YEARS OLD

To H. W. M.

BETWEEN the springs of six and seven,  
Two fresh years' fountains, clear  
Of all but golden sand for leaven,  
Child, midway passing here,  
As earth for love's sake dares bless heaven,  
So dare I bless you, dear.

Between two bright well-heads, that brighten  
With every breath that blows  
Too loud to lull, too low to frighten,  
But fain to rock, the rose,  
Your feet stand fast, your lit smiles lighten,  
That might rear flowers from snows.

You came when winds unleashed were snarling  
Behind the frost-bound hours,  
A snow-bird sturdier than the starling,  
A storm-bird fledged for showers,  
That spring might smile to find you, darling,  
First born of all the flowers.

Could love make worthy things of worthless,  
My song were worth an ear :  
Its note should make the days most mirthless  
The merriest of the year,  
And wake to birth all buds yet birthless  
To keep your birthday, dear.

But where your birthday brightens heaven  
No need has earth, God knows,  
Of light or warmth to melt or leaven  
The frost or fog that glows  
With sevenfold heavenly lights of seven  
Sweet springs that cleave the snows.

Could love make worthy music of you,  
And match my Master's powers,  
Had even my love less heart to love you,  
A better song were ours ;  
With all the rhymes like stars above you,  
And all the words like flowers.

*September 30, 1880.*

## A PARTING SONG

(To a friend leaving England for a year's residence in Australia.)

THESE winds and suns of spring  
That warm with breath and wing  
The trembling sleep of earth, till half awake  
She laughs and blushes ere her slumber break,  
For all good gifts they bring  
Require one better thing,  
For all the loans of joy they lend us, borrow  
One sharper dole of sorrow,  
To sunder soon by half a world of sea  
Her son from England and my friend from me.

Nor hope nor love nor fear  
May speed or stay one year,  
Nor song nor prayer may bid, as mine would fain,  
The seasons perish and be born again,  
Restoring all we lend,  
Reluctant, of a friend,  
The voice, the hand, the presence and the sight  
That lend their life and light  
To present gladness and heart-strengthening cheer,  
Now lent again for one reluctant year.

## A PARTING SONG

So much we lend indeed,  
 Perforce, by force of need,  
 So much we must ; even these things and no more  
 The far sea sundering and the sundered shore,  
 A world apart from ours,  
 So much the imperious hours,  
 Exact, and spare not ; but no more than these  
 All earth and all her seas  
 From thought and faith of trust and truth can  
 borrow,  
 Not memory from desire, nor hope from sorrow.

Through bright and dark and bright  
 Returns of day and night  
 I bid the swift year speed and change and give  
 His breath of life to make the next year live  
 With sunnier suns for us  
 A life more prosperous,  
 And laugh with flowers more fragrant, that shall see  
 A merrier March for me,  
 A rosier-girdled race of night with day,  
 A goodlier April and a tenderer May.

For him the inverted year  
 Shall mark our seasons here  
 With alien alternation, and revive  
 This withered winter, slaying the spring alive  
 With darts more sharply drawn  
 As nearer draws the dawn  
 In heaven transfigured over earth transformed  
 And with our winters warmed  
 And wasted with our summers, till the beams  
 Rise on his face that rose on Dante's dreams.

Till fourfold morning rise  
 Of starshine on his eyes,  
 Dawn of the spheres that brand steep heaven across  
 At height of night with semblance of a cross  
 Whose grace and ghostly glory  
 Poured heaven on purgatory,  
 Seeing with their flamelets risen all heaven grow  
 glad  
 For love thereof it had  
 And lovely joy of loving ; so may these  
 Make bright with welcome now their southern seas.

O happy stars, whose mirth  
 The saddest soul on earth  
 That ever soared and sang found strong to bless,  
 Lightening his life's harsh load of heaviness  
 With comfort sown like seed  
 In dream though not in deed  
 On sprinkled wastes of darkling thought divine,  
 Let all your lights now shine  
 With all as glorious gladness on his eyes  
 For whom indeed and not in dream they rise.

As those great twins of air  
 Hailed once with oldworld prayer  
 Of all folk alway faring forth by sea,  
 So now may these for grace and guidance be,  
 To guard his sail and bring  
 Again to brighten spring  
 The face we look for and the hand we lack  
 Still, till they light him back,  
 As welcome as to first discovering eyes  
 Their light rose ever, soon on his to rise.

As parting now he goes  
From snow-time back to snows,  
So back to spring from summer may next year  
Restore him, and our hearts receive him here  
The best good gift that spring  
Had ever grace to bring  
At fortune's happiest hour of star-blest birth  
Back to love's homebright earth,  
To eyes with eyes that commune, hand with hand  
And the old warm bosom of all our mother-land.

Earth and sea-wind and sea  
And stars and sunlight be  
Alike all prosperous for him, and all hours  
Have all one heart, and all that heart as ours.  
All things as good as strange  
Crown all the seasons' change  
With changing flower and compensating fruit  
From one year's ripening root ;  
Till next year bring us, roused at spring's recall,  
A heartier flower and goodlier fruit than all.

*March 26, 1880.*

BY THE NORTH SEA

## TO WALTER THEODORE WATTS

“We are what suns and winds and waters make us.”—LANDOR.

*SEA, wind, and sun, with light and sound and breath  
 The spirit of man fulfilling these create  
 That joy wherewith man's life grown passionate  
 Gains heart to hear and sense to read and faith  
 To know the secret word our Mother saith  
 In silence, and to see, though doubt wax great,  
 Death as the shadow cast by life on fate,  
 Passing, whose shade we call the shadow of death.*

*Brother, to whom our Mother as to me  
 Is dearer than all dreams of days undone,  
 This song I give you of the sovereign three  
 That are as life and sleep and death are, one :  
 A song the sea-wind gave me from the sea,  
 Where nought of man's endures before the sun.*

## BY THE NORTH SEA

I

I

A LAND that is lonelier than ruin ;  
 A sea that is stranger than death :  
 Far fields that a rose never blew in,  
 Wan waste where the winds lack breath ;  
 Waste endless and boundless and flowerless  
 But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free :  
 Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless  
 To strive with the sea.

2

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,  
 Far flutters the weft of the grass  
 Spun dense over desolate hollows  
 More pale than the clouds as they pass :  
 Thick woven as the weft of a witch is  
 Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,  
 Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches  
 Are waifs on the wind.

## 3

The pastures are herdless and sheepless,  
    No pasture or shelter for herds :  
The wind is relentless and sleepless,  
    And restless and songless the birds ;  
Their cries from afar fall breathless,  
    Their wings are as lightnings that flee ;  
For the land has two lords that are deathless  
    Death's self, and the sea.

## 4

These twain, as a king with his fellow,  
    Hold converse of desolate speech :  
And her waters are haggard and yellow  
    And crass with the scurf of the beach :  
And his garments are grey as the hoary  
    Wan sky where the day lies dim ;  
And his power is to her, and his glory,  
    As hers unto him.

## 5

In the pride of his power she rejoices,  
    In her glory he glows and is glad :  
In her darkness the sound of his voice is,  
    With his breath she dilates and is mad :  
“ If thou slay me, O death, and outlive me,  
    Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee.”  
“ Shall I give thee not back if thou give me,  
    O sister, O sea ? ”

## 6

And year upon year dawns living,  
And age upon age drops dead :  
And his hand is not weary of giving,  
And the thirst of her heart is not fed :  
And the hunger that moans in her passion,  
And the rage in her hunger that roars,  
As a wolf's that the winter lays lash on,  
Still calls and implores.

## 7

Her walls have no granite for girder,  
No fortalice fronting her stands :  
But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder  
Are less than the banks of her sands :  
These number their slain by the thousand ;  
For the ship hath no surety to be,  
When the bank is abreast of her bows and  
Aflush with the sea.

## 8

No surety to stand, and no shelter  
To dawn out of darkness but one,  
Out of waters that hurtle and welter  
No succour to dawn with the sun,  
But a rest from the wind as it passes,  
Where, hardly redeemed from the waves,  
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses  
The dead in their graves.

A multitude noteless of numbers,  
As wild weeds cast on an heap :  
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,  
And softer than song is their sleep ;  
And sweeter than all things and stranger  
The sense, if perchance it may be,  
That the wind is divested of danger  
And scatheless the sea.

That the roar of the banks they breasted  
Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,  
And the strength of his wings that invested  
The wind, as the strength of a bird's ;  
As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's  
That cry to him back if he cries,  
As over the graves and their hollows  
Days darken and rise.

As the souls of the dead men disburdened  
And clean of the sins that they sinned,  
With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned  
And delight as a wave's in the wind,  
And delight as the wind's in the billow,  
Birds pass, and deride with their glee  
The flesh that has dust for its pillow  
As wrecks have the sea.

## 12

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,  
Wings flash through the dusk like beams ;  
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,  
The bird in the graveyard gleams ;  
As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens  
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,  
The graves that the bird's note brightens  
Grow bright for the bird.

## 13

As the waves of the numberless waters  
That the wind cannot number who guides  
Are the sons of the shore and the daughters  
Here lulled by the chime of the tides :  
And here in the press of them standing  
We know not if these or if we  
Live truest, or anchored to landing  
Or drifted to sea.

## 14

In the valley he named of decision  
No denser were multitudes met  
When the soul of the seer in her vision  
Saw nations for doom of them set ;  
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendour  
Of judgment, the sword and the rod ;  
But the doom here of death is more tender  
And gentler the god.

And gentler the wind from the dreary  
Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,  
Being weary, speaks peace to the weary  
From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped ;  
And sweeter than all that we call so  
The seal of their slumber shall be  
Till the graves that embosom them also  
Be sapped of the sea.

## II

## I

For the heart of the waters is cruel,  
And the kisses are dire of their lips,  
And their waves are as fire is to fuel  
To the strength of the sea-faring ships,  
Though the sea's eye gleam as a jewel  
To the sun's eye back as he dips.

## 2

Though the sun's eye flash to the sea's  
Live light of delight and of laughter,  
And her lips breathe back to the breeze  
The kiss that the wind's lips waft her  
From the sun that subsides, and sees  
No gleam of the storm's dawn after.

## 3

And the wastes of the wild sea-marches  
Where the borderers are matched in their might-  
Bleak fens that the sun's weight parches,  
Dense waves that reject his light—  
Change under the change-coloured arches  
Of changeless morning and night.

The waves are as ranks enrolled  
Too close for the storm to sever :  
The fens lie naked and cold,  
But their heart fails utterly never :  
The lists are set from of old,  
And the warfare endureth for ever.

## III

## I

Miles, and miles, and miles of desolation !  
Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change !  
Sign or token of some eldest nation  
Here would make the strange land not so strange.  
Time-forgotten, yea since time's creation,  
Seem these borders where the sea-birds range.

## 2

Slowly, gladly, full of peace and wonder  
Grows his heart who journeys here alone.  
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under  
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone.  
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,  
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

## 3

Tall the plumage of the rush-flower tosses,  
Sharp and soft in many a curve and line  
Gleam and glow the sea-coloured marsh-mosses  
Salt and splendid from the circling brine.  
Streak on streak of glimmering seashine crosses  
All the land sea-saturate as with wine.

## 4

Far, and far between, in divers orders,  
 Clear grey steeples cleave the low grey sky ;  
 Fast and firm as time-unshaken warders,  
 Hearts made sure by faith, by hope made high.  
 These alone in all the wild sea-borders  
 Fear no blast of days and nights that die.

## 5

All the land is like as one man's face is,  
 Pale and troubied still with change of cares.  
 Doubt and death pervade her clouded spaces :  
 Strength and length of life and peace are theirs ;  
 Theirs alone amid these weary places,  
 Seeing not how the wild world frets and fares.

## 6

Firm and fast where all is cloud that changes  
 Cloud-clogged sunlight, cloud by sunlight thinned,  
 Stern and sweet, above the sand-hill ranges  
 Watch the towers and tombs of men that sinned  
 Once, now calm as earth whose only change is  
 Wind, and light, and wind, and cloud, and wind.

## 7

Out and in and out the sharp straits wander,  
 In and out and in the wild way strives,  
 Starred and paved and lined with flowers that  
 squander  
 Gold as golden as the gold of hives,  
 Salt and moist and multiform : but yonder  
 See, what sign of life or death survives ?

## 8

Seen then only when the songs of olden  
 Harps were young whose echoes yet endure,  
 Hymned of Homer when his years were golden,  
 Known of only when the world was pure,  
 Here is Hades, manifest, beholding,  
 Surely, surely here, if aught be sure !

## 9

Where the border-line was crossed, that, sundering  
 Death from life, keeps weariness from rest,  
 None can tell, who fares here forward wondering ;  
 None may doubt but here might end his quest.  
 Here life's lightning joys and woes once thundering  
 Sea-like round him cease like storm suppressed.

## 10

Here the wise wave-wandering steadfast-hearted  
 Guest of many a lord of many a land  
 Saw the shape or shade of years departed,  
 Saw the semblance risen and hard at hand,  
 Saw the mother long from love's reach parted,  
 Anticleia, like a statue stand.

## 11

Statue ? nay, nor tissued image woven  
 Fair on hangings in his father's hall ;  
 Nay, too fast her faith of heart was proven,  
 Far too firm her loveliest love of all ;  
 Love wherethrough the loving heart was cloven,  
 Love that hears not when the loud Fates call.

## 12

Love that lives and stands up re-created  
 Then when life has ebbed and anguish fled ;  
 Love more strong than death or all things fated,  
 Child's and mother's, lit by love and led ;  
 Love that found what life so long awaited  
 Here, when life came down among the dead.

## 13

Here, where never came alive another,  
 Came her son across the sundering tide  
 Crossed before by many a warrior brother  
 Once that warred on Ilion at his side ;  
 Here spread forth vain hands to clasp the mother  
 Dead, that sorrowing for his love's sake died.

## 14

Parted, though by narrowest of divisions,  
 Clasp he might not, only might implore,  
 Sundered yet by bitterest of derisions,  
 Son, and mother from the son she bore—  
 Here ? But all dispeopled here of visions  
 Lies, forlorn of shadows even, the shore.

## 15

All too sweet such men's Hellenic speech is,  
 All too faint they lived of light to see,  
 Once to see the darkness of these beaches,  
 Once to sing this Hades found of me  
 Ghostless, all its gulfs and creeks and reaches,  
 Sky, and shore, and cloud, and waste, and sea.

## IV

## I

But aloft and afront of me faring  
Far forward as folk in a dream  
That strive, between doubting and daring,  
Right on till the goal for them gleam,  
Full forth till their goal on them lighten,  
The harbour where fain they would be,  
What headlands there darken and brighten ?  
What change in the sea ?

## 2

What houses and woodlands that nestle  
Safe inland to lee of the hill  
As it slopes from the headlands that wrestle  
And succumb to the strong sea's will ?  
Truce is not, nor respite, nor pity,  
For the battle is waged not of hands  
Where over the grave of a city  
The ghost of it stands.

## 3

Where the wings of the sea-wind slacken,  
Green lawns to the landward thrive,  
Fields brighten and pine-woods blacken,  
And the heat in their heart is alive ;

They blossom and warble and murmur,  
 For the sense of their spirit is free :  
 But harder to shoreward and firmer  
 The grasp of the sea.

## 4

Like ashes the low cliffs crumble,  
 The banks drop down into dust,  
 The heights of the hills are made humble,  
 As a reed's is the strength of their trust :  
 As a city's that armies environ,  
 The strength of their stay is of sand :  
 But the grasp of the sea is as iron,  
 Laid hard on the land.

## 5

A land that is thirstier than ruin ;  
 A sea that is hungrier than death ;  
 Heaped hills that a tree never grew in ;  
 Wide sands where the wave draws breath :  
 All solace is here for the spirit  
 That ever for ever may be  
 For the soul of thy son to inherit,  
 My mother, my sea.

## 6

O delight of the headlands and beaches !  
 O desire of the wind on the wold,  
 More glad than a man's when it reaches  
 That end which it sought from of old

And the palm of possession is dreary  
 To the sense that in search of it sinned ;  
 But nor satisfied ever nor weary  
 Is ever the wind.

## 7

The delight that he takes but in living  
 Is more than of all things that live :  
 For the world that has all things for giving  
 Has nothing so goodly to give :  
 But more than delight his desire is,  
 For the goal where his pinions would be  
 Is immortal as air or as fire is,  
 Immense as the sea.

## 8

Though hence come the moan that he borrows  
 From darkness and depth of the night,  
 Though hence be the spring of his sorrows,  
 Hence too is the joy of his might ;  
 The delight that his doom is for ever  
 To seek and desire and rejoice,  
 And the sense that eternity never  
 Shall silence his voice.

## 9

That satiety never may stifle  
 Nor weariness ever estrange  
 Nor time be so strong as to rifle  
 Nor change be so great as to change

His gift that renews in the giving,  
 The joy that exalts him to be  
 Alone of all elements living  
 The lord of the sea.

## 10

What is fire, that its flame should consume her ?  
 More fierce than all fires are her waves :  
 What is earth, that its gulfs should entomb her ?  
 More deep are her own than their graves.  
 Life shrinks from his pinions that cover  
 The darkness by thunders bedinned :  
 But she knows him, her lord and her lover  
 The godhead of wind.

## 11

For a season his wings are about her,  
 His breath on her lips for a space ;  
 Such rapture he wins not without her  
 In the width of his worldwide race.  
 Though the forests bow down, and the mountains  
 Wax dark, and the tribes of them flee,  
 His delight is more deep in the fountains  
 And springs of the sea.

## 12

There are those too of mortals that love him,  
 There are souls that desire and require,  
 Be the glories of midnight above him  
 Or beneath him the daysprings of fire :  
 And their hearts are as harps that approve him  
 And praise him as chords of a lyre

That were fain with their music to move him  
To meet their desire

## 13

To descend through the darkness to grace them,  
Till darkness were lovelier than light :  
To encompass and grasp and embrace them,  
Till their weakness were one with his might :  
With the strength of his wings to caress them,  
With the blast of his breath to set free ;  
With the mouths of his thunders to bless them  
For sons of the sea.

## 14

For these have the toil and the guerdon  
That the wind has eternally : these  
Have part in the boon and the burden  
Of the sleepless unsatisfied breeze,  
That finds not, but seeking rejoices  
That possession can work him no wrong :  
And the voice at the heart of their voice is  
The sense of his song.

## 15

For the wind's is their doom and their blessing ;  
To desire, and have always above  
A possession beyond their possessing,  
A love beyond reach of their love.  
Green earth has her sons and her daughters,  
And these have their guerdons ; but we  
Are the wind's and the sun's and the water's,  
Elect of the sea.

## V

## I

For the sea too seeks and rejoices,  
Gains and loses and gains,  
And the joy of her heart's own choice is  
As ours, and as ours are her pains :  
As the thoughts of our hearts are her voices,  
And as hers is the pulse of our veins.

## 2

Her fields that know not of dearth  
Nor lie for their fruit's sake fallow  
Laugh large in the depth of their mirth :  
But inshore here in the shallow,  
Embroiled with encumbrance of earth,  
Their skirts are turbid and yellow.

## 3

The grime of her greed is upon her,  
The sign of her deed is her soil ;  
As the earth's is her own dishonour,  
And corruption the crown of her toil :  
She hath spoiled and devoured, and her honour  
Is this, to be shamed by her spoil.

But afar where pollution is none,  
Nor ensign of strife nor endeavour,  
Where her heart and the sun's are one,  
And the soil of her sin comes never,  
She is pure as the wind and the sun,  
And her sweetness endureth for ever.

## VI

## 1

Death, and change, and darkness everlasting,  
Deaf, that hears not what the daystar saith,  
Blind, past all remembrance and forecasting,  
Dead, past memory that it once drew breath ;  
These, above the washing tides and wasting,  
Reign, and rule this land of utter death.

## 2

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,  
Very death of very death, begun  
When none knows,—the knowledge is forbidden—  
Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,  
Born, not made—abhorred, unchained, unhidden,  
Night stands here defiant of the sun.

## 3

Change of change, and death of death begotten,  
Darkness born of darkness, one and three,  
Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,  
Crowned with heaven, enthroned on land and sea,  
Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten,  
God of Time, thy likeness worships thee.

## 4

Lo, thy likeness of thy desolation,  
 Shape and figure of thy might, O Lord,  
 Formless form, incarnate miscreation,  
 Served of all things living and abhorred ;  
 Earth herself is here thine incarnation,  
 Time, of all things born on earth adored.

## 5

All that worship thee are fearful of thee ;  
 No man may not worship thee for fear :  
 Prayers nor curses prove not nor disprove thee,  
 Move nor change thee with our change of cheer :  
 All at last, though all abhorred thee, love thee,  
 God, the sceptre of whose throne is here. .

## 6

Here thy throne and sceptre of thy station,  
 Here the palace paven for thy feet ;  
 Here thy sign from nation unto nation  
 Passed as watchword for thy guards to greet,  
 Guards that go before thine exaltation,  
 Ages, clothed with bitter years and sweet.

## 7

Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,  
 Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm  
 Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,  
 Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,  
 Built of holy hands for holy pity,  
 Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

## 8

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,  
 Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,  
 Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,  
 Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,  
 Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion,  
 Hailed a God more merciful than Time.

## 9

Ah, less mighty, less than Time prevailing,  
 Shrunk, expelled, made nothing at his nod,  
 Less than clouds across the sea-line sailing,  
 Lies he, stricken by his master's rod.  
 "Where is man?" the cloister murmurs wailing;  
 Back the mute shrine thunders—"Where is God?"

## 10

Here is all the end of all his glory—  
 Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones.  
 Dead, like him, one hollow tower and hoary  
 Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,  
 Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story:  
 Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones.

## 11

Low and loud and long, a voice for ever,  
 Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.  
 Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,  
 Dust from dust as years relapse along;  
 Graves where men made sure to rest, and never  
 Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

## 12

Now displaced, devoured and desecrated,  
 Now by Time's hands darkly disinterred,  
 These poor dead that sleeping here awaited  
 Long the archangel's re-creating word,  
 Closed about with roofs and walls high-gated  
 Till the blast of judgment should be heard,

## 13

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,  
 Corpse and coffin, yea the very graves,  
 Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,  
 Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves,  
 Desolate beyond man's desolation,  
 Shrink and sink into the waste of waves.

## 14

Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded,  
 Shroudless, down the loose collapsing banks,  
 Crumble, from their constant place detruded,  
 That the sea devours and gives not thanks.  
 Graves where hope and prayer and sorrow brooded  
 Gape and slide and perish, ranks on ranks.

## 15

Rows on rows and line by line they crumble,  
 They that thought for all time through to be.  
 Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble  
 Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.  
 Earth, and man, and all their gods wax humble  
 Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea.

## VII

## 1

But afar on the headland exalted,  
    But beyond in the curl of the bay,  
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted  
    Our father is lord of the day.  
Our father and lord that we follow,  
    For deathless and ageless is he ;  
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,  
    His sandal the sea.

## 2

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,  
    And her green floor glitters with fire,  
The sea has the sun for a harper,  
    The sun has the sea for a lyre.  
The waves are a pavement of amber,  
    By the feet of the sea-winds trod  
To receive in a god's presence-chamber  
    Our father, the God.

## 3

Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,  
    Is master and God of the land :  
But the air is fulfilled of the glory  
    That is shed from our lord's right hand.

O father of all of us ever,  
 All glory be only to thee  
 From heaven, that is void of thee never,  
 And earth, and the sea.

## 4

O Sun, whereof all is beheld,  
 Behold now the shadow of this death,  
 This place of the sepulchres, olden  
 And emptied and vain as a breath.  
 The bloom of the bountiful heather  
 Laughs broadly beyond in thy light  
 As dawn, with her glories to gather,  
 At darkness and night.

## 5

Though the Gods of the night lie rotten  
 And their honour be taken away  
 And the noise of their names forgotten,  
 Thou, Lord, art God of the day.  
 Thou art father and saviour and spirit,  
 O Sun, of the soul that is free  
 And hath grace of thy grace to inherit  
 Thine earth and thy sea.

## 6

The hills and the sands and the beaches,  
 The waters adrift and afar,  
 The banks and the creeks and the reaches,  
 How glad of thee all these are !

The flowers, overflowing, overcrowded,  
Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth :  
The delight of thy coming unclouded  
Makes music of earth.

## 7

I, last least voice of her voices,  
Give thanks that were mute in me long  
To the soul in my soul that rejoices  
For the song that is over my song.  
Time gives what he gains for the giving  
Or takes for his tribute of me ;  
My dreams to the wind everliving,  
My song to the sea.

# A CENTURY OF ROUNDELS

.



## DEDICATION

TO

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

SONGS light as these may sound, though deep and strong  
The heart spake through them, scarce should hope to please  
Ears tuned to strains of loftier thoughts than throng

Songs light as these.

Yet grace may set their sometime doubt at ease,  
Nor need their too rash reverence fear to wrong  
The shrine it serves at and the hope it sees.

For childlike loves and laughters thence prolong  
Notes that bid enter, fearless as the breeze,  
Even to the shrine of holiest-hearted song,  
Songs light as these.



## IN HARBOUR

## I

GOODNIGHT and goodbye to the life whose signs  
 denote us  
 As mourners clothed with regret for the life gone by ;  
 To the waters of gloom whence winds of the day-  
 spring float us  
 Goodnight and goodbye.

A time is for mourning, a season for grief to sigh ;  
 But were we not fools and blind, by day to devote us  
 As thralls to the darkness, unseen of the sundawn's  
 eye ?

We have drunken of Lethe at length, we have eaten  
 of lotus ;  
 What hurts it us here that sortows are born and die ?  
 We have said to the dream that caressed and the  
 dread that smote us  
 Goodnight and goodbye.

## II

Outside of the port ye are moored in, lying  
 Close from the wind and at ease from the tide,  
 What sounds come swelling, what notes fall dying  
 Outside ?

They will not cease, they will not abide :  
Voices of presage in darkness crying  
Pass and return and relapse aside.

Ye see not, but hear ye not wild wings flying  
To the future that wakes from the past that died ?  
Is grief still sleeping, is joy not sighing  
Outside ?

## THE WAY OF THE WIND

THE wind's way in the deep sky's hollow  
None may measure, as none can say  
How the heart in her shows the swallow  
The wind's way.

Hope nor fear can avail to stay  
Waves that whiten on wrecks that wailow,  
Times and seasons that wane and slay.

Life and love, till the strong night swallow  
Thought and hope and the red last ray,  
Swim the waters of years that follow  
The wind's way.

### “ HAD I WIST ”

HAD I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing  
Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's  
bright mist,

How the time should come for hearts to sigh in  
saying

“ Had I wist ”—

Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,  
Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying,  
Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying  
Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts  
resist :

Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind and  
straying,

“ Had I wist.”

## RECOLLECTIONS

## I

YEARS upon years, as a course of clouds that thicken,  
 Thronging the ways of the wind that shifts and  
 veers,  
 Pass, and the flames of remembered fires requicken  
 Years upon years.

Surely the thought in a man's heart hopes or fears  
 Now that forgetfulness needs must here have stricken  
 Anguish, and sweetened the sealed-up springs of  
 tears.

Ah, but the strength of regrets that strain and sicken,  
 Yearning for love that the veil of death endears,  
 Slackens not wing for the wings of years that  
 quicken—  
 Years upon years.

## II

Years upon years, and the flame of love's high altar  
 Trembles and sinks, and the sense of listening ears  
 Heeds not the sound that it heard of love's blithe  
 psalter  
 Years upon years.

Only the sense of a heart that hearkens hears,  
Louder than dreams that assail and doubts that  
    palter,  
Sorrow that slept and that wakes ere sundawn peers.

Wakes, that the heart may behold, and yet not falter,  
Faces of children as stars unknown of, spheres  
Seen but of love, that endures though all things alter,  
    Years upon years.

## III

Years upon years, as a watch by night that passes,  
Pass, and the light of their eyes is fire that sears  
Slowly the hopes of the fruit that life amasses  
    Years upon years.

Pale as the glimmer of stars on moorland meres  
Lighten the shadows reverberate from the glasses  
Held in their hands as they pass among their peers.

Lights that are shadows, as ghosts on graveyard  
    grasses,  
Moving on paths that the moon of memory cheers,  
Show but as mists over cloudy mountain passes  
    Years upon years.

## TIME AND LIFE

## I

TIME, thy name is sorrow, says the stricken  
 Heart of life, laid waste with wasting flame  
 Ere the change of things and thoughts requicken,  
 Time, thy name.

Girt about with shadow, blind and lame,  
 Ghosts of things that smite and thoughts that sicken  
 Hunt and hound thee down to death and shame.

Eyes of hours whose paces halt or quicken  
 Read in bloodred lines of loss and blame,  
 Writ where cloud and darkness round it thicken,  
 Time, thy name.

## II

Nay, but rest is born of me for healing,  
 —So might haply time, with voice represt,  
 Speak : is grief the last gift of my dealing ?  
 Nay, but rest.

All the world is wearied, east and west,  
Tired with toil to watch the slow sun wheeling,  
Twelve loud hours of life's laborious quest.

Eyes forspent with vigil, faint and reeling,  
Find at last my comfort, and are blest,  
Not with rapturous light of life's revealing—  
Nay, but rest.

## A DIALOGUE

## I

DEATH, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee :  
 Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,  
 One shelter where our spirits fain would be,  
 Death, if thou wilt ?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,  
 Imperial : but some roof of wildwood tree,  
 Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free  
 From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt ;  
 Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,  
 Death, if thou wilt ?

## II

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me ?  
 What knowest thou of my workings, where and how  
 What things I fashion ? Nay, behold and see,  
 Man, what art thou ?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,  
 What are they but my seedlings ? Earth and sea  
 Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me : though thou be Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow, When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee.

Man, what art thou ?

## III

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said, Immortal ; if thou make us nought, or we Survive : thy power is made but of our dread, Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee : Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapour shed, Shall vanish ; all the shows of them shall flee : Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead, Death, if thou be.

## PLUS ULTRA

FAR beyond the sunrise and the sunset rises  
Heaven, with worlds on worlds that lighten and  
respond :  
Thought can see not thence the goal of hope's sur-  
mises  
Far beyond.

Night and day have made an everlasting bond  
Each with each to hide in yet more deep disguises  
Truth, till souls of men that thirst for truth despond.

All that man in pride of spirit slight or prizes,  
All the dreams that make him fearful, fain, or fond,  
Fade at forethought's touch of life's unknown  
surprises  
Far beyond.

## A DEAD FRIEND

## I

**GONE, O gentle heart and true,  
Friend of hopes foregone,  
Hopes and hopeful days with you  
Gone ?**

**Days of old that shone  
Saw what none shall see anew,  
When we gazed thereon.**

**Soul as clear as sunlit dew,  
Why so soon pass on,  
Forth from all we loved and knew  
Gone ?**

## II

**Friend of many a season fled,  
What may sorrow send  
Toward thee now from lips that said  
“ Friend ” ?**

**Sighs and songs to blend  
Praise with pain uncomforted  
Though the praise ascend ?**

Darkness hides no dearer head :  
Why should darkness end  
Day so soon, O dear and dead  
Friend ?

## III

Dear in death, thou hast thy part  
Yet in life, to cheer  
Hearts that held thy gentle heart  
Dear.

Time and chance may sear  
Hope with grief, and death may part  
Hand from hand's clasp here :

Memory, blind with tears that start,  
Sees through every tear  
All that made thee, as thou art,  
Dear.

## IV

True and tender, single-souled,  
What should memory do  
Weeping o'er the trust we hold  
True ?

Known and loved of few,  
But of these, though small their fold,  
Loved how well were you !

Change, that makes of new things old,  
Leaves one old thing new ;  
Love which promised truth, and told  
True.

## V

Kind as heaven, while earth's control  
 Still had leave to bind  
 Thee, thy heart was toward man's whole  
 Kind.

Thee no shadows blind  
 Now : the change of hours that roll  
 Leaves thy sleep behind.

Love, that hears thy death-bell toll  
 Yet, may call to mind  
 Scarce a soul as thy sweet soul  
 Kind.

## VI

How should life, O friend, forget  
 Death, whose guest art thou ?  
 Faith responds to love's regret,  
 How ?

Still, for us that bow  
 Sorrowing, still, though life be set,  
 Shines thy bright mild brow.

Yea, though death and thou be met,  
 Love may find thee now  
 Still, albeit we know not yet  
 How.

## VII

Past as music fades, that shone  
While its life might last ;  
As a song-bird's shadow flown  
Past !

Death's reverberate blast  
Now for music's lord has blown  
Whom thy love held fast.

Dead thy king, and void his throne ;  
Yet for grief at last  
Love makes music of his own  
Past.

## PAST DAYS

## I

DEAD and gone, the days we had together,  
 Shadow-stricken all the lights that shone  
 Round them, flown as flies the blown foam's feather,  
 Dead and gone.

Where we went, we twain, in time foregone,  
 Forth by land and sea, and cared not whether,  
 If I go again, I go alone.

Bound am I with time as with a tether ;  
 Thee perchance death leads enfranchised on,  
 Far from deathlike life and changeful weather,  
 Dead and gone.

## II

Above the sea and sea-washed town we dwelt,  
 We twain together, two brief summers, free  
 From heed of hours as light as clouds that melt  
 Above the sea.

Free from all heed of aught at all were we,  
 Save chance of change that clouds or sunbeams dealt  
 And gleam of heaven to windward or to lee.

The Norman downs with bright grey waves for belt  
Were more for us than inland ways might be ;  
A clearer sense of nearer heaven was felt  
    Above the sea.

## III

Cliffs and downs and headlands which the forward-hasting  
Flight of dawn and eve empurples and embrowns,  
Wings of wild sea-winds and stormy seasons wasting  
    Cliffs and downs,

These, or ever man was, were : the same sky frowns,  
Laughs, and lightens, as before his soul, forecasting  
Times to be, conceived such hopes as time discrowns.

These we loved of old : but now for me the blasting  
Breath of death makes dull the bright small seaward towns,  
Clothes with human change these all but everlasting  
    Cliffs and downs.

## AUTUMN AND WINTER

## I

THREE months bade wane and wax the wintering  
moon  
Between two dates of death, while men were fain  
Yet of the living light that all too soon  
Three months bade wane.

Cold autumn, wan with wrath of wind and rain,  
Saw pass a soul sweet as the sovereign tune  
That death smote silent when he smote again.

First went my friend, in life's mid light of noon,  
Who loved the lord of music : then the strain  
Whence earth was kindled like as heaven in June  
Three months bade wane.

## II

A herald soul before its master's flying  
Touched by some few moons first the darkling goal  
Where shades rose up to greet the shade, espying  
A herald soul ;

Shades of dead lords of music, who control  
Men living by the might of men undying,  
With strength of strains that make delight of dole.

The deep dense dust on death's dim threshold lying  
Trembled with sense of kindling sound that stole  
Through darkness, and the night gave ear, descrying  
A herald soul.

## III

One went before, one after, but so fast  
They seem gone hence together, from the shore  
Whence we now gaze : yet ere the mightier passed  
One went before ;

One whose whole heart of love, being set of yore  
On that high joy which music lends us, cast  
Light round him forth of music's radiant store.

Then went, while earth on winter glared aghast,  
The mortal god he worshipped, through the door  
Wherethrough so late, his lover to the last,  
One went before.

## IV

A star had set an hour before the sun  
Sank from the skies wherethrough his heart's pulse  
yet  
Thrills audibly : but few took heed, or none,  
A star had set.

All heaven rings back, sonorous with regret,  
The deep dirge of the sunset : how should one  
Soft star be missed in all the concourse met ?

But, O sweet single heart whose work is done,  
Whose songs are silent, how should I forget  
That ere the sunset's fiery goal was won  
A star had set ?

## THE DEATH OF RICHARD WAGNER

## I

MOURNING on earth, as when dark hours descend,  
 Wide-winged with plagues, from heaven ; when hope  
 and mirth

Wane, and no lips rebuke or reprehend  
 Mourning on earth.

The soul wherein her songs of death and birth,  
 Darkness and light, were wont to sound and blend,  
 Now silent, leaves the whole world less in worth.

Winds that make moan and triumph, skies that bend,  
 Thunders, and sound of tides in gulf and firth,  
 Spake through his spirit of speech, whose death  
 should send  
 Mourning on earth.

## II

The world's great heart, whence all things strange  
 and rare  
 Take form and sound, that each inseparate part  
 May bear its burden in all tuned thoughts that share  
 The world's great heart—

The fountain forces, whence like steeds that start  
 Leap forth the powers of earth and fire and air,  
 Seas that revolve and rivers that depart—

Spake, and were turned to song : yea, all they were,  
 With all their works, found in his mastering art  
 Speech as of powers whose uttered word laid bare  
 The world's great heart.

## III

From the depths of the sea, from the wellsprings of  
 earth, from the wastes of the midmost night,  
 From the fountains of darkness and tempest and  
 thunder, from heights where the soul would be,  
 The spell of the mage of music evoked their sense,  
 as an unknown light  
 From the depths of the sea.

As a vision of heaven from the hollows of ocean, that  
 none but a god might see,  
 Rose out of the silence of things unknown of a  
 presence, a form, a might,  
 And we heard as a prophet that hears God's message  
 against him, and may not flee.

Eye might not endure it, but ear and heart with  
 a rapture of dark delight,  
 With a terror and wonder whose core was joy, and a  
 passion of thought set free,  
 Felt only the rising of doom divine as a sundawn risen  
 to sight  
 From the depths of the sea.

## TWO PRELUDES

## I

## LOHENGRIN

Love, out of the depth of things,  
 As a dewfall felt from above,  
 From the heaven whence only springs  
 Love,

Love, heard from the heights thereof,  
 The clouds and the watersprings,  
 Draws close as the clouds remove.

And the soul in it speaks and sings,  
 A swan sweet-souled as a dove,  
 An echo that only rings  
 Love.

## II

## TRISTAN UND ISOLDE

Fate, out of the deep sea's gloom,  
 When a man's heart's pride grows great,  
 And nought seems now to foredoom  
 Fate.

## TWO PRELUDES

Fate, laden with fears in wait,  
Draws close through the clouds that loom,  
Till the soul see, all too late,

More dark than a dead world's tomb,  
More high than the sheer dawn's gate,  
More deep than the wide sea's womb,  
Fate.

## THE LUTE AND THE LYRE

DEEP desire, that pierces heart and spirit to the root,  
 Finds reluctant voice in verse that yearns like soaring  
     fire,  
 Takes exultant voice when music holds in high  
     pursuit  
     Deep desire.

Keen as burns the passion of the rose whose buds  
     respire,  
 Strong as grows the yearning of the blossom toward  
     the fruit,  
 Sounds the secret half unspoken ere the deep tones  
     tire.

Slow subsides the rapture that possessed love's  
     flower-soft lute,  
 Slow the palpitation of the triumph of the lyre :  
 Still the soul feels burn, a flame unslaked though  
     these be mute,  
     Deep desire.

## PLUS INTRA

SOUL within sense, immeasurable, obscure,  
Insepulchred and deathless, through the dense  
Deep elements may scarce be felt as pure  
Soul within sense.

From depth and height by measurers left immense,  
Through sound and shape and colour, comes the  
unsure  
Vague utterance, fitful with supreme suspense.

All that may pass, and all that must endure,  
Song speaks not, painting shows not : more intense  
And keen than these, art wakes with music's lure  
Soul within sense.

## CHANGE

BUT now life's face beholden  
Seemed bright as heaven's bare brow  
With hope of gifts withholden  
But now.

From time's full-flowering bough  
Each bud spake bloom to embolden  
Love's heart, and seal his vow.

Joy's eyes grew deep with olden  
Dreams, born he wist not now ;  
Thought's meanest garb was golden ;  
But now !

## A BABY'S DEATH

A LITTLE soul scarce fledged for earth  
 Takes wing with heaven again for goal  
 Even while we hailed as fresh from birth  
 A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll.  
 Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth  
 What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,  
 And all things held in time's control  
 Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth  
 A little soul.

## II

The little feet that never trod  
 Earth, never strayed in field or street,  
 What hand leads upward back to God  
 The little feet ?

A rose in June's most honied heat,  
 When life makes keen the kindling sod,  
 Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period  
 A few swift moons have seen complete  
 Since mother's hands first clasped and shod  
 The little feet.

## III

The little hands that never sought  
 Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,  
 What gift has death, God's servant, brought  
 The little hands ?

We ask : but love's self silent stands,  
 Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought  
 To search where death's dim heaven expands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought,  
 Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,  
 Where hands of guiding angels caught  
 The little hands.

## IV

The little eyes that never knew  
 Light other than of dawning skies,  
 What new life now lights up anew  
 The little eyes ?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise  
 Such light as never heaven let through  
 To lighten earth from Paradise ?

No storm, we know, may change the blue  
 Soft heaven that haply death descries ;  
 No tears, like these in ours, bedew  
 The little eyes.

## V

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,  
So strait the wide world's range,  
He would not stay to wonder why  
Was life so strange ?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange  
Beside that house on high  
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange ?

That here at once his soul put by  
All gifts of time and change,  
And left us heavier hearts to sigh  
“ Was life so strange ? ”

## VI

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair  
The sweet small frame ;  
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were.  
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own heart he  
came,  
And might not bear  
The cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare  
And soft a flame :  
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed him there  
Angel by name.

## VII

The song that smiled upon his birthday here  
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled  
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless tear  
    The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever styled  
Sovereign of arts, and angel : fate and fear  
Knew then their master, and were reconciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer sphere  
Michael, an angel and a little child,  
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his bier  
    The song that smiled.

## ONE OF TWAIN

## I

ONE of twain, twin-born with flowers that waken,  
 Now hath passed from sense of sun and rain :  
 Wind from off the flower-crowned branch hath shaken  
 One of twain.

One twin flower must pass, and one remain  
 One, the word said soothly, shall be taken,  
 And another left : can death refrain ?

Two years since was love's light song mistaken,  
 Blessing then both blossoms, half in vain ?  
 Night outspeeding light hath overtaken  
 One of twain.

## II

Night and light ? O thou of heart unwary,  
 Love, what knowest thou here at all aright,  
 Lured, abused, misled as men by fairy  
 Night and light ?

Haply, where thine eyes behold but night,  
Soft as o'er her babe the smile of Mary  
Light breaks flowerwise into new-born sight.

What though night of light to thee be chary?  
What though stars of hope like flowers take flight?  
Seest thou all things here, where all see vary  
Night and light?

## DEATH AND BIRTH

DEATH and birth should dwell not near together :  
Wealth keeps house not, even for shame, with  
dearth :  
Fate doth ill to link in one brief tether  
Death and birth.

Harsh the yoke that binds them, strange the girth  
Seems that girds them each with each : yet whether  
Death be best, who knows, or life on earth ?

Ill the rose-red and the sable feather  
Blend in one crown's plume, as grief with mirth :  
Ill met still are warm and wintry weather,  
Death and birth.

## BIRTH AND DEATH

BIRTH and death, twin-sister and twin-brother,  
Night and day, on all things that draw breath,  
Reign, while time keeps friends with one another  
    Birth and death.

Each brow-bound with flowers diverse of wreath,  
Heaven they hail as father, earth as mother,  
Faithful found above them and beneath.

Smiles may lighten tears, and tears may smother  
Smiles, for all that joy or sorrow saith :  
Joy nor sorrow knows not from each other  
    Birth and death.

## BENEDICTION

BLEST in death and life beyond man's guessing  
Little children live and die, possest  
Still of grace that keeps them past expressing  
Blest.

Each least chirp that rings from every nest,  
Each least touch of flower-soft fingers pressing  
Aught that yearns and trembles to be prest,

Each least glance, gives gift of grace, redressing  
Grief's worst wrongs : each mother's nurturing breast  
Feeds a flower of bliss, beyond all blessing  
Blest

## ETUDE RÉALISTE

A BABY's feet, like sea-shells pink,  
 Might tempt, should heaven see meet,  
 An angel's lips to kiss, we think,  
 A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat  
 They stretch and spread and wink  
 Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink  
 Gleam half so heavenly sweet  
 As shine on life's untrodden brink  
 A baby's feet.

## II

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled  
 Whence yet no leaf expands,  
 Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,  
 A baby's hands.

Then, fast as warriors grip their brands  
 When battle's bolt is hurled,  
 They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled  
Match, even in loveliest lands,  
The sweetest flowers in all the world—  
A baby's hands.

## III

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,  
Ere lips learn words or sighs,  
Bless all things bright enough to win  
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,  
And sleep flows out and in,  
Sees perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,  
Their speech make dumb the wise,  
By mute glad godhead felt within  
A baby's eyes.

**BABYHOOD****I**

**A BABY shines as bright  
If winter or if May be  
On eyes that keep in sight  
A baby.**

**Though dark the skies or grey be  
It fills our eyes with light,  
If midnight or midday be.**

**Love hails it, day and night,  
The sweetest thing that may be,  
Yet cannot praise aright  
A baby.**

**II**

**All heaven, in every baby born,  
All absolute of earthly leaven;  
Reveals itself, though man may scorn  
All heaven.**

**Yet man might feel all sin forgiven,  
All grief appeased, all pain outworn,  
By this one revelation given.**

Soul, now forget thy burdens borne :  
 Heart, be thy joys now seven times seven :  
 Love shows in light more bright than morn  
 All heaven.

## III

What likeness may define, and stray not  
 From truth's exactest way,  
 A baby's beauty? Love can say not  
 What likeness may.

The Mayflower loveliest held in May  
 Of all that shine and stay not  
 Laughs not in rosier disarray.

Sleek satin, swansdown, buds that play not  
 As yet with winds that play,  
 Would fain be matched with this, and may not :  
 What likeness may?

## IV

Rose, round whose bed  
 Dawn's cloudlets close,  
 Earth's brightest-bred  
 Rose !

No song, love knows,  
 May praise the head  
 Your curtain shows.

Ere sleep has fled,  
 The whole child glows  
 One sweet live red  
 Rose.

## FIRST FOOTSTEPS

A LITTLE way, more soft and sweet  
Than fields aflower with May,  
A babe's feet, venturing, scarce complete  
A little way.

Eyes full of dawning day  
Look up for mother's eyes to meet,  
Too blithe for song to say.

Glad as the golden spring to greet  
Its first live leaflet's play,  
Love, laughing, leads the little feet  
A little way.

## A NINTH BIRTHDAY

FEBRUARY 4, 1883.

## I

THREE times thrice hath winter's rough white wing  
 Crossed and curdled wells and streams with ice  
 Since his birth whose praises love would sing  
 Three times thrice.

Earth nor sea bears flower nor pearl of price  
 Fit to crown the forehead of my king,  
 Honey meet to please him, balm, nor spice.

Love can think of nought but love to bring  
 Fit to serve or do him sacrifice  
 Ere his eyes have looked upon the spring  
 Three times thrice.

## II

Three times thrice the world has fallen on slumber,  
 Shone and waned and withered in a trice,  
 Frost has fettered Thames and Tyne and Humber  
 Three times thrice,

Fogs have swoln too thick for steel to slice,  
Cloud and mud have soiled with grime and umber  
Earth and heaven, defaced as souls with vice,

Winds have risen to wreck, snows fallen to cumber,  
Ships and chariots, trapped like rats or mice,  
Since my king first smiled, whose years now number  
Three times thrice.

## III

Three times thrice, in wine of song full-flowing,  
Pledge, my heart, the child whose eyes suffice,  
Once beheld, to set thy joy-bells going  
Three times thrice.

Not the lands of palm and date and rice  
Glow more bright when summer leaves them glowing,  
Laugh more light when suns and winds entice.

Noon and eve and midnight and cock-crowing,  
Child whose love makes life as paradise,  
Love should sound your praise with clarions blowing  
Three times thrice.

## NOT A CHILD

## I

“Not a child : I call myself a boy,”  
 Says my king, with accent stern yet mild,  
 Now nine years have brought him change of joy ;  
 “Not a child.”

How could reason be so far beguiled,  
 Err so far from sense’s safe employ,  
 Stray so wide of truth, or run so wild ?

Seeing his face bent over book or toy,  
 Child I called him, smiling : but he smiled  
 Back, as one too high for vain annoy—  
 Not a child.

## II

Not a child ? alack the year !  
 What should ail an undefiled  
 Heart, that he would fain appear  
 Not a child ?

Men, with years and memories piled  
 Each on other, far and near,  
 Fain again would so be styled :

Fain would cast off hope and fear,  
Rest, forget, be reconciled :  
Why would you so fain be, dear,  
Not a child ?

## III

Child or boy, my darling, which you will,  
Still your praise finds heart and song employ,  
Heart and song both yearning toward you still,  
Child or boy.

All joys else might sooner pall or clov  
Love than this which inly takes its fill,  
Dear, of sight of your more perfect joy.

Nay, be aught you please, let all fulfil  
All your pleasure ; be your world your toy :  
Mild or wild we love you, loud or still,  
Child or boy.

## TO DORA DORIAN

CHILD of two strong nations, heir  
Born of high-souled hope that smiled,  
Seeing for each brought forth a fair  
Child,

By thy gracious brows, and wild  
Golden-clouded heaven of hair,  
By thine eyes elate and mild,

Hope would fain take heart to swear  
Men should yet be reconciled,  
Seeing the sign she bids thee bear,  
Child.

## THE ROUNDEL

A roundel is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,  
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,  
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear

A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—  
Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance of rapture or fear—  
That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear  
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,  
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,

A roundel is wrought.

## AT SEA

“ FAREWELL and adieu ” was the burden prevailing  
Long since in the chant of a home-faring crew ;  
And the heart in us echoes, with laughing or wailing,  
Farewell and adieu.

Each year that we live shall we sing it anew,  
With a water untravelled before us for sailing  
And a water behind us that wrecks may bestrew.

The stars of the past and the beacons are paling,  
The heavens and the waters are hoarier of hue :  
But the heart in us chants not an all unavailing  
Farewell and adieu.

## WASTED LOVE

WHAT shall be done for sorrow  
With love whose race is run ?  
Where help is none to borrow,  
What shall be done ?

In vain his hands have spun  
The web, or drawn the furrow  
No rest their toil háth won.

His task is all gone thorough  
And fruit thereof is none :  
And who dare say to-morrow  
What shall be done ?

## BEFORE SUNSET

Love's twilight wanes in heaven above,  
On earth ere twilight reigns :  
Ere fear may feel the chill thereof,  
Love's twilight wanes.

Ere yet the insatiate heart complains  
" Too much, and scarce enough,"  
The lip so late athirst refrains.

Soft on the neck of either dove  
Love's hands let slip the reins :  
And while we look for light of love  
Love's twilight wanes.

## A SINGING LESSON

FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought, as the proverb rehearses,

Is good, or was held so, for ladies : but nought  
In a song can be good if the turn of the verse is  
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the  
thought

Ring smooth, and as light as the spray that disperses  
Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof  
wrought.

Let the soul in it shine through the sound as it pierces  
Men's hearts with possession of music unsought ;  
For the bounties of song are no jealous god's mercies,  
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

## FLOWER-PIECES

## I

## LOVE LIES BLEEDING

LOVE lies bleeding in the bed whereover  
 Roses lean with smiling mouths or pleading :  
 Earth lies laughing where the sun's dart clove her :  
 Love lies bleeding.

Stately shine his purple plumes, exceeding  
 Pride of princes : nor shall maid or lover  
 Find on earth a fairer sign worth heeding.

Yet may love, sore wounded, scarce recover  
 Strength and spirit again, with life receding :  
 Hope and joy, wind-winged, about him hover :  
 Love lies bleeding.

## II

## LOVE IN A MIST

Light love in a mist, by the midsummer moon mis-  
 guided,  
 Scarce seen in the twilight garden if gloom insist,  
 Seems vainly to seek for a star whose gleam has  
 derided  
 Light love in a mist.

All day in the sun, when the breezes do all they list,  
His soft blue raiment of cloudlike blossom abided  
Unrent and unwithered of winds and of rays that  
kissed.

Blithe-hearted or sad, as the cloud or the sun sub-  
sided,  
Love smiled in the flower with a meaning whereof  
none wist  
Save two that beheld, as a gleam that before them  
glided,  
Light love in a mist.

## THREE FACES

## I

## VENTIMIGLIA

THE sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank :  
 Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and  
 free,

A tall girl paced, with eyes too proud to thank  
 The sky and sea.

One dead flat sapphire, void of wrath or glee,  
 Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank  
 The weary Mediterranean, drear to see.

More deep, more living, shone her eyes that drank  
 The breathless light and shed again on me,  
 Till pale before their splendour waned and shrank  
 The sky and sea.

## II

## GENOA

Again the same strange might of eyes, that saw  
 In heaven and earth nought fairer, overcame  
 My sight with rapture of reiterate awe,  
 Again the same.

The self-same pulse of wonder shook like flame  
The spirit of sense within me : what strange law  
Had bid this be, for blessing or for blame ?

To what veiled end that fate or chance foresaw  
Came forth this second sister face, that came  
Absolute, perfect, fair without a flaw,  
Again the same ?

## III

## VENICE

Out of the dark pure twilight, where the stream  
Flows glimmering, streaked by many a birdlike bark  
That skims the gloom whence towers and bridges  
gleam  
Out of the dark.

Once more a face no glance might choose but mark  
Shone pale and bright, with eyes whose deep slow  
beam  
Made quick the twilight, lifeless else and stark.

The same it seemed, or mystery made it seem,  
As those before behoden ; but St. Mark  
Ruled here the ways that showed it like a dream  
Out of the dark.

## EROS

## I

EROS, from rest in isles far-famed,  
 With rising Anthesterion rose,  
 And all Hellenic heights acclaimed  
 Eros.

The sea one pearl, the shore one rose,  
 All round him all the flower-month flamed  
 And lightened, laughing off repose.

Earth's heart, sublime and unashamed,  
 Knew, even perchance as man's heart knows,  
 The thirst of all men's nature named  
 Eros.

## II

Eros, a fire of heart untamed,  
 A light of spirit in sense that glows,  
 Flamed heavenward still ere earth defamed  
 Eros.

Nor fear nor shame durst curb or close  
 His golden godhead, marred and maimed,  
 Fast round with bonds that burnt and froze.

Ere evil faith struck blind and lamed  
Love, pure as fire or flowers or snows,  
Earth hailed as blameless and unblamed  
Eros.

## III

Eros, with shafts by thousands aimed  
At laughing lovers round in rows,  
Fades from their sight whose tongues proclaimed  
Eros.

But higher than transient shapes or shows  
The light of love in life inflamed  
Springs, toward no goal that these disclose.

Above those heavens which passion claimed  
Shines, veiled by change that ebbs and flows,  
The soul in all things born or framed,  
Eros.

## SORROW

SORROW, on wing through the world for ever,  
Here and there for awhile would borrow  
Rest, if rest might haply deliver  
Sorrow.

One thought lies close in her heart gnawn thorough  
With pain, a weed in a dried-up river,  
A rust-red share in an empty furrow.

Hearts that strain at her chain would sever  
The link where yesterday frets to-morrow :  
All things pass in the world, but never  
Sorrow.

**SLEEP**

SLEEP, when a soul that her own clouds cover  
Wails that sorrow should always keep  
Watch, nor see in the gloom above her  
Sleep,

Down, through darkness naked and steep,  
Sinks, and the gifts of his grace recover  
Soon the soul, though her wound be deep.

God beloved of us, all men's lover,  
All most weary that smile or weep  
Feel thee afar or anear them hover,  
Sleep.

## ON AN OLD ROUNDDEL

Translated by D. G. Rossetti from the French of Villon.

## I

DEATH, from thy rigour a voice appealed,  
 And men still hear what the sweet cry saith,  
 Crying aloud in thine ears fast sealed,  
 Death.

As a voice in a vision that vanisheth,  
 Through the grave's gate barred and the portal  
 steeled  
 The sound of the wail of it travelleth.

Wailing aloud from a heart unhealed,  
 It woke response of melodious breath  
 From lips now too by thy kiss congealed,  
 Death.

## II

Ages ago, from the lips of a sad glad poet  
 Whose soul was a wild dove lost in the whirling snow,  
 The soft keen plaint of his pain took voice to show it  
 Ages ago.

So clear, so deep, the divine drear accents flow,  
No soul that listens may choose but thrill to know it,  
Pierced and wrung by the passionate music's throes.

For us there murmurs a nearer voice below it,  
Known once of ears that never again shall know,  
Now mute as the mouth which felt death's wave  
o'erflow it

Ages ago.

## A LANDSCAPE BY COURBET

Low lies the mere beneath the moorside, still  
And glad of silence : down the wood sweeps clear  
To the utmost verge where fed with many a rill  
    Low lies the mere.

The wind speaks only summer : eye nor ear  
Sees aught at all of dark, hears aught of shrill,  
From sound or shadow felt or fancied here.

Strange, as we praise the dead man's might and skill,  
Strange that harsh thoughts should make such heavy  
    cheer,  
While, clothed with peace by heaven's most gentle will,  
    Low lies the mere.

## A FLOWER-PIECE BY FANTIN

**HEART'S EASE** or pansy, pleasure or thought  
Which would the picture give us of these?  
Surely the heart that conceived it sought  
Heart's ease.

Surely by glad and divine degrees  
The heart impelling the hand that wrought  
Wrought comfort here for a soul's disease.

Deep flowers, with lustre and darkness fraught,  
From glass that gleams as the chill still seas  
Lean and lend for a heart distraught  
Heart's ease.

## A NIGHT-PIECE BY MILLET

Wind and sea and cloud and cloud-forsaking  
Mirth of moonlight where the storm leaves free  
Heaven awhile, for all the wrath of waking  
Wind and sea.

Bright with glad mad rapture, fierce with glee,  
Laughs the moon, borne on past cloud's o'er-  
taking  
Fast, it seems, as wind or sail can flee.

One blown sail beneath her, hardly making  
Forth, wild-winged for harbourage yet to be,  
Strives and leaps and pants beneath the breaking  
Wind and sea.

## "MARZO PAZZO"

MAD March with the wind in his wings wide-spread,  
Leaps from heaven, and the deep dawn's arch  
Hails re-risen again from the dead  
    Mad March.

Soft small flames on rowan and larch  
Break forth as laughter on lips that said  
Nought till the pulse in them beat love's march.

But the heartbeat now in the lips rose-red  
Speaks life to the world, and the winds that parch  
Bring April forth as a bride to wed  
    Mad March.

**DEAD LOVE**

**DEAD** love, by treason slain, lies stark,  
White as a **dead** stark-stricken dove :  
None that pass by him pause to mark  
    Dead love.

His heart, that strained and yearned and strove  
As toward the sundawn strives the lark,  
Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark  
When rings the trumpet blown above :  
It will not raise from out the dark  
    Dead love.

## DISCORD

UNRECONCILED by life's fleet years, that fled  
With changeful clang of pinions wide and wild,  
Though two great spirits had lived, and hence had  
sped

Unreconciled ;

Though time and change, harsh time's imperious  
child,  
That wed strange hands together, might not wed  
High hearts by hope's misprision once beguiled ;

Faith, by the light from either's memory shed,  
Sees, radiant as their ends were undefiled,  
One goal for each—not twain among the dead  
Unreconciled.

## CONCORD

RECONCILED by death's mild hand, that giving  
Peace gives wisdom, not more strong than mild,  
Love beholds them, each without misgiving  
    Reconciled.

Each on earth alike of earth reviled,  
Hated, feared, derided, and forgiving,  
Each alike had heaven at heart, and smiled.

Both bright names, clothed round with man's thanks-  
giving,  
Shine, twin stars above the storm-drifts piled,  
Dead and deathless, whom we saw not living  
    Reconciled.

## MOURNING

ALAS my brother ! the cry of the mourners of old  
That cried on each other,  
All crying aloud on the dead as the death-note rolled,  
Alas my brother !

As flashes of dawn that mists from an east wind  
smother  
With fold upon fold,  
The past years gleam that linked us one with another.

Time sunders hearts as of brethren whose eyes  
behold  
No more their mother :  
But a cry sounds yet from the shrine whose fires wax  
cold,  
Alas my brother !

## APEROTOS EROS

STRONG as death, and cruel as the grave,  
Clothed with cloud and tempest's blackening breath,  
Known of death's dread self, whom none outbrave,  
Strong as death,

Love, brow-bound with anguish for a wreath,  
Fierce with pain, a tyrant-hearted slave,  
Burns above a world that groans beneath

Hath not pity power on thee to save,  
Love ? hath power no pity ? Nought he saith,  
Answering : blind he walks as wind or wave,  
Strong as death.

## TO CATULLUS

My brother, my Valerius, dearest head  
Of all whose crowning bay-leaves crown their mother  
Rome, in the notes first heard of thine I read  
    My brother.

No dust that death or time can strew may smother  
Love and the sense of kinship inly bred  
From loves and hates at one with one another.

To thee was Cæsar's self nor dear nor dread,  
Song and the sea were sweeter each than other :  
How should I living fear to call thee dead,  
    My brother ?

“INSULARUM OCELLE”

SARK, fairer than aught in the world that the lit skies  
cover,  
Laughs inly behind her cliffs, and the seafarers mark  
As a shrine where the sunlight serves, though the  
blown clouds hover,  
Sark.

We mourn, for love of a song that outsang the lark,  
That nought so lovely behoden of Sirmio's lover  
Made glad in Propontis the flight of his Pontic bark.

Here earth lies lordly, triumphal as heaven is above  
her,  
And splendid and strange as the sea that upbears as  
an ark,  
As a sign for the rapture of storm-spent eyes to  
discover,  
Sark.

## IN SARK

ABREAST and ahead of the sea is a crag's front cloven  
asunder  
With strong sea-breach and with wasting of winds  
whence terror is shed  
As a shadow of death from the wings of the darkness  
on waters that thunder  
Abreast and ahead.

At its edge is a sepulchre hollowed and hewn for a  
lone man's bed,  
Propped open with rock and agape on the sky and  
the sea thereunder,  
But roofed and walled in well from the wrath of them,  
slept its dead.

Here might not a man drink rapture of rest, or  
delight above wonder,  
Beholding, a soul disembodied, the days and the  
nights that fled,  
With splendour and sound of the tempest around and  
above him and under,  
Abreast and ahead ?

## IN GUERNSEY

TO THEODORE WATTS

## I

THE heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,  
 Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,  
 Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures  
 The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ~~ever~~ this away,  
 This blessing given of beauty that endures,  
 This glory shown us, not to pass but stay ?

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures  
 What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—  
 The word that seals for ever mine and yours  
 The heavenly bay.

## II

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,  
 What new delight of waters, may this be,  
 The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned  
 My mother sea ?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,  
Who hast my soul for ever : cliff and sand  
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand  
Strike out from shore : more close it brings to me,  
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,  
    My mother sea.

## III

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and  
    o'er us  
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and  
    strong  
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten  
    before us  
    Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not  
    wrong ;  
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's  
    chorus ;  
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the  
    song ?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that  
    wore us,  
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that  
    throng,  
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us  
    Across and along.

## IV

On Dante's track by some funereal spell  
 Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not  
 back  
 We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell  
 On Dante's track.

The grey path ends : the gaunt rocks gape : the  
 black  
 Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,  
 Glares darkness : are the fires of old grown slack ?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell  
 As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,  
 The secrets of the sepulchres of hell  
 On Dante's track ?

## V

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,  
 From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands :  
 Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so  
 By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,  
 Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe,  
 Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow  
 Seems visible in this flame : there Geryon stands :  
 No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show  
 By mere men's hands.

## VI

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart  
athirst and fasting,  
Hungers here, barred up for ever, whence as one  
whom dreams affright  
Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening  
doom and casting Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands,  
clothed with light,  
Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside : but here  
the night speaks, blasting  
Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known  
from depth to height.

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in  
souls forecasting  
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn beyond fear's  
reach, and higher than sight  
Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with  
everlasting Night.

## VII

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,  
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst :  
No fear more fearful than its own may find  
The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,  
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,  
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save wastes behind  
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and  
nursed

This type and likeness of the accurst man's mind,  
The house accurst.

## VIII

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,  
The house that had the light of the earth for guest  
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name  
Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest  
When storm laid waste his eyrie : hence he came  
Again, when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame  
And mocked for madness : worst, they sware, was  
best :  
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,  
Beloved and blest.

## ENVOI

FLY, white butterflies, out to sea,  
Frail pale wings for the winds to try,  
Small white wings that we scarce can see  
    Fly.

Here and there may a chance-caught eye  
Note in a score of you twain or three  
Brighter or darker of tinge or dye.

Some fly light as a laugh of glee,  
Some fly soft as a low long sigh :  
All to the haven where each would be  
    Fly.



## ATHENS: AN ODE



## ATHENS

## AN ODE

ERE from under earth again like fire the violet  
     kindle, [Str. 1.  
 Ere the holy buds and hoar on olive-branches  
     bloom,  
 Ere the crescent of the last pale month of winter  
     dwindle,  
 Shrink, and fall as falls a dead leaf on the dead  
     month's tomb,  
 Round the hills whose heights the first-born olive-  
     blossom brightened,  
 Round the city brow-bound once with violets like  
     a bride,  
 Up from under earth again a light that long since  
     lightened  
     Breaks, whence all the world took comfort as all  
     time takes pride.  
 Pride have all men in their fathers that were free  
     before them,  
 In the warriors that begat us free-born pride have  
     we :  
 But the fathers of their spirits, how may men adore  
     them,  
 With what rapture may we praise, who bade our  
     souls be free ?

Sons of Athens born in spirit and truth are all born  
free men ;  
Most of all, we, nurtured where the north wind  
holds his reign :  
Children all we sea-folk of the Salaminian seamen,  
Sons of them that beat back Persia they that beat  
back Spain.  
Since the songs of Greece fell silent, none like ours  
have risen ;  
Since the sails of Greece fell slack, no ships have  
sailed like ours ;  
How should we lament not, if her spirit sit in  
prison ?  
How should we rejoice not, if her wreaths renew  
their flowers ?  
All the world is sweeter, if the Athenian violet  
quicken :  
All the world is brighter, if the Athenian sun  
return :  
All things foul on earth wax fainter, by that sun's  
light stricken :  
All ill growths are withered, where those fragrant  
flower-lights burn.  
All the wandering waves of seas with all their warring  
waters  
Roll the record on for ever of the sea-fight there,  
When the capes were battle's lists, and all the straits  
were slaughter's,  
And the myriad Medes as foam-flakes on the  
scattering air.  
Ours the lightning was that cleared the north and lit  
the nations,  
But the light that gave the whole world light of  
old was she :

Ours an age or twain, but hers are endless generations :

All the world is hers at heart, and most of all are we.

Ye that bear the name about you of her glory, [*Ant.* 1.]

Men that wear the sign of Greeks upon you sealed,  
Yours is yet the choice to write yourselves in story

Sons of them that fought the Marathonian field.

Slaves of no man were ye, said your warrior poet,

Neither subject unto man as underlings :

Yours is now the season here wherein to show it,

If the seed ye be of them that knew not kings.

If ye be not, swords nor words alike found brittle

From the dust of death to raise you shall prevail :

Subject swords and dead men's words may stead you little,

If their old king-hating heart within you fail.

If your spirit of old, and not your bonds, be broken,

If the kingless heart be molten in your breasts,

By what signs and wonders, by what word or token,

Shall ye drive the vultures from your eagles' nests ?

All the gains of tyrants Freedom counts for losses ;

Nought of all the work done holds she worth the work,

When the slaves whose faith is set on crowns and crosses

Drive the Cossack bear against the tiger Turk.

Neither cross nor crown nor crescent shall ye bow to,

Nought of Araby nor Jewry, priest nor king :

As your watchword was of old, so be it now too :

As from lips long stilled, from yours let healing spring.

Through the fights of old, your battle-cry was healing,  
 And the Saviour that ye called on was the Sun :  
 Dawn by dawn behold in heaven your God, revealing  
 Light from darkness as when Marathon was won.  
 Gods were yours yet strange to Turk or Galilean,  
 Light and Wisdom only then as gods adored :  
 Pallas was your shield, your comforter was Pæan,  
 From your bright world's navel spake the Sun your  
 Lord.

Though the names be lost, and changed the signs  
 of Light and Wisdom be, [Ep. 1.  
 By these only shall men conquer, by these only be set  
 free :

When the whole world's eye was Athens, these were  
 yours, and theirs were ye.

Light was given you of your wisdom, light ye gave  
 the world again :

As the sun whose godhead lightened on her soul was  
 Hellas then :

Yea, the least of all her children as the chosen of  
 other men.

Change your hearts not with your garments, nor your  
 faith with creeds that change :

Truth was yours, the truth which time and chance  
 transform not nor estrange :

Purer truth nor higher abides not in the reach of  
 time's whole range.

Gods are they in all men's memories and for all time's  
 periods,

They that hurled the host back seaward which had  
 scourged the sea with rods :

Gods for us are all your fathers, even the least of  
 these as gods.

In the dark of days the thought of them is with us,  
strong to save,  
They that had no lord, and made the Great King  
lesser than a slave ;  
They that rolled all Asia back on Asia, broken like a  
wave.  
No man's men were they, no master's and no God's  
but these their own :  
Gods not loved in vain nor served amiss, nor all yet  
overthrown :  
Love of country, Freedom, Wisdom, Light, and none  
save these alone.  
King by king came up against them, sire and son,  
and turned to flee :  
Host on host roared westward, mightier each than  
each, if more might be :  
Field to field made answer, clamorous like as wave  
to wave at sea.  
Strife to strife responded, loud as rocks to clangorous  
rocks respond  
Where the deep rings wreck to seamen held in tem-  
pest's thrall and bond,  
Till when war's bright work was perfect peace as  
radiant rose beyond :  
Peace made bright with fruit of battle, stronger made  
for storm gone down,  
With the flower of song held heavenward for the  
violet of her crown  
Woven about the fragrant forehead of the fostress  
maiden's town.  
Gods arose alive on earth from under stroke of human  
hands :  
As the hands that wrought them, these are dead, and  
mixed with time's dead sands :

But the godhead of supernal song, though these now stand not, stands.

Pallas is not, Phœbus breathes no more in breathing brass or gold :

Clytæmnestra towers, Cassandra wails, for ever : Time is bold,

But nor heart nor hand hath he to unwrite the scriptures writ of old.

Dead the great chryselephantine God, as dew last evening shed :

Dust of earth or foam of ocean is the symbol of his head :

Earth and ocean shall be shadows when Prometheus shall be dead.

Fame around her warriors living rang through Greece and lightened,

[Str. 2.]

Moving equal with their stature, stately with their strength :

Thebes and Lacedæmon at their breathing presence brightened,

Sense or sound of them filled all the live land's breadth and length.

All the lesser tribes put on the pure Athenian fashion, One Hellenic heart was from the mountains to the sea :

Sparta's bitter self grew sweet with high half-human passion,

And her dry thorns flushed aflower in strait Thermopylæ.

Fruitless yet the flowers had fallen, and all the deeds died fruitless,

Save that tongues of after men, the children of her peace,

Took the tale up of her glories, transient else and rootless,  
 And in ears and hearts of all men left the praise of Greece.  
 Fair the war-time was when still, as beacon answering beacon,  
 Sea to land flashed fight, and thundered note of wrath or cheer ;  
 But the strength of noonday night hath power to waste and weaken,  
 Nor may light be passed from hand to hand of year to year  
 If the dying deed be saved not, ere it die for ever,  
 By the hands and lips of men more wise than years are strong ;  
 If the soul of man take heed not that the deed die never,  
 Clothed about with purple and gold of story, crowned with song.  
 Still the burning heart of boy and man alike rejoices,  
 Hearing words which made it seem of old for all who sang  
 That their heaven of heavens waxed happier when from free men's voices  
*Well-beloved Harmodius and Aristogeiton rang.*  
 Never fell such fragrance from the flower-month's rose-red kirtle  
 As from chaplets on the bright friends' brows who slew their lord :  
 Greener grew the leaf and balmier blew the flower of myrtle  
 When its blossom sheathed the sheer tyrannicida sword.

None so glorious garland crowned the feast Pan-  
athenæan

As this wreath too frail to fetter fast the Cyprian  
dove :

None so fiery song sprang sunwards annual as the  
pæan

Praising perfect love of friends and perfect country's  
love.

Higher than highest of all those heavens wherefrom  
the starry

[*Ant. 2.*]

Song of Homer shone above the rolling fight,  
Gleams like spring's green bloom on boughs all gaunt  
and gnarry

Soft live splendour as of flowers of foam in flight,  
Glows a glory of mild-winged maidens upward mount-  
ing

Sheer through air made shrill with strokes of smooth  
swift wings

Round the rocks beyond foot's reach, past eyesight's  
counting,

Up the cleft where iron wind of winter rings

Round a God fast clenched in iron jaws of fetters,

Him who culled for man the fruitful flower of fire,  
Bared the darkling scriptures writ in dazzling letters,

Taught the truth of dreams deceiving men's desire,  
Gave their water-wandering chariot-seats of ocean

Wings, and bade the rage of war-steeds champ the  
rein,

Showed the symbols of the wild birds' wheeling  
motion,

Waged for man's sake war with God and all his  
train.

Earth, whose name was also Righteousness, a mother

Many-named and single-natured, gave him breath  
Whence God's wrath could wring but this word and  
none other --

*He may smite me, yet he shall not do to death.*

Him the tongue that sang triumphant while tor-  
mented

Sang as loud the sevenfold storm that roared ere-  
while

Round the towers of Thebes till wrath might rest  
contented :

Sang the flight from smooth soft-sanded banks of  
Nile,

When like mateless doves that fly from snare or  
tether

Came the suppliants landwards trembling as they  
trod,

And the prayer took wing from all their tongues  
together--

*King of kings, most holy of holies, blessed God.*

But what mouth may chant again, what heart may  
know it,

All the rapture that all hearts of men put on  
When of Salamis the time-transcending poet

Sang, whose hand had chased the Mede at Mara-  
thon ?

Darker dawned the song with stormier wings above  
the watch-fire spread

[Ep. 2.

Whence from Ida toward the hill of Hermes leapt the  
light that said

Troy was fallen, a torch funereal for the king's triumphal head.  
Dire indeed the birth of Leda's womb that had God's self to sire  
Bloomed, a flower of love that stung the soul with fangs that gnaw like fire :  
But the twin-born human-fathered sister-flower bore fruit more dire.  
Scarce the cry that called on airy heaven and all swift winds on wing,  
Wells of river-heads, and countless laugh of waves past reckoning,  
Earth which brought forth all, and the orbèd sun that looks on everything,  
Scarce that cry fills yet men's hearts more full of heart-devouring dread  
Than the murderous word said mocking, how the child whose blood he shed  
Might clasp fast and kiss her father where the dead salute the dead.  
But the latter note of anguish from the lips that mocked her lord,  
When her son's hand bared against the breast that suckled him his sword,  
How might man endure, O Æschylus, to hear it and record ?  
How might man endure, being mortal yet, O thou most highest, to hear ?  
How record, being born of woman ? Surely not thy Furies near,  
Surely this beheld, this only, blasted hearts to death with fear.  
Not the hissing hair, nor flakes of blood that oozed from eyes of fire,

Nor the snort of savage sleep that snuffed the hungering heart's desire  
Where the hunted prey found hardly space and harbour to respire ;  
She whose likeness called them--“ Sleep ye, ho ? what need of you that sleep ? ”  
(Ah, what need indeed, where she was, of all shapes that night may keep  
Hidden dark as death and deeper than men's dreams of hell are deep ? )  
She the murderer of her husband, she the huntress of her son,  
More than ye was she, the shadow that no God withstands but one,  
Wisdom equal-eyed and stronger and more splendid than the sun.  
Yea, no God may stand betwixt us and the shadows of our deeds,  
Nor the light of dreams that lighten darkness, nor the prayer that pleads,  
But the wisdom equal-souled with heaven, the light alone that leads.  
Light whose law bids home those childless children of eternal night,  
Soothed and reconciled and mastered and transmuted in men's sight  
Who behold their own souls, clothed with darkness once, now clothed with light.  
King of kings and father crowned of all our fathers crowned of yore,  
Lord of all the lords of song, whose head all heads bow down before,  
Glory be to thee from all thy sons in all tongues evermore.

Rose and vine and olive and deep ivy-bloom entwining [Str. 3.]

Close the goodliest grave that e'er they closest might entwine

Keep the wind from wasting and the sun from too strong shining

Where the sound and light of sweetest songs still float and shine.

Here the music seems to illume the shade, the light to whisper

Song, the flowers to put not odours only forth, but words

Sweeter far than fragrance: here the wandering wreaths twine crisper

Far, and louder far exults the note of all wild birds.

Thoughts that change us, joys that crown and sorrows that enthrone us,

Passions that enrobe us with a clearer air than ours,

Move and breathe as living things beheld round white Colonus,

Audibler than melodies and visibler than flowers.

Love, in fight unconquered, Love, with spoils of great men laden,

Never sang so sweet from throat of woman or of dove :

Love, whose bed by night is in the soft cheeks of a maiden,

And his march is over seas, and low roofs lack not Love ;

Nor may one of all that live, ephemeral or eternal,

Fly nor hide from Love ; but whoso ciaps him fast goes mad.

Never since the first-born year with flowers first-born  
grew vernal

Such a song made listening hearts of lovers glad or  
sad.

Never sounded note so radiant at the rayless portal  
Opening wide on the all-concealing lowland of the  
dead

As the music mingling, when her doomsday marked  
her mortal,

From her own and old men's voices round the  
bride's way shed,

Round the grave her bride-house, hewn for endless  
habitation,

Where, shut out from sunshine, with no bridegroom  
by, she slept ;

But beloved of all her dark and fateful generation,  
But with all time's tears and praise besprinkled  
and bewept :

Well-beloved of outcast father and self-slaughtered  
mother,

Born, yet unpolluted, of their blind incestuous  
bed ;

Best-beloved of him for whose dead sake she died,  
her brother,

Hallowing by her own life's gift her own born  
brother's head ;

Not with wine or oil nor any less libation [Ant. 3.  
Hallowed, nor made sweet with humbler perfume's  
breath ;

Not with only these redeemed from desecration,  
But with blood and spirit of life poured forth to  
death ;

Blood unspotted, spirit unsullied, life devoted,  
Sister too supreme to make the bride's hope  
good,  
Daughter too divine as woman to be noted,  
Spouse of only death in mateless maidenhood.  
Yea, in her was all the prayer fulfilled, the saying  
All accomplished—*Would that fate would let me  
wear*  
*Hallowed innocence of words and all deeds, weighing  
Well the laws thereof, begot on holier air,  
Far on high sublimely stablished, whereof only  
Heaven is father; nor did birth of mortal mould  
Bring them forth, nor shall oblivion lull to lonely  
Slumber. Great in these is God, and grows not old.*  
Therefore even that inner darkness where she  
perished  
Surely seems as holy and lovely, seen aright,  
As desirable and as dearly to be cherished,  
As the haunt closed in with laurels from the light,  
Deep inwound with olive and wild vine inwoven,  
Where a godhead known and unknown makes men  
pale,  
But the darkness of the twilight noon is cloven  
Still with shrill sweet moan of many a nightingale.  
Closer clustering there they make sweet noise to-  
gether,  
Where the fearful gods look gentler than our fear,  
And the grove thronged through with birds of holiest  
feather  
Grows nor pale nor dumb with sense of dark things  
near.  
There her father, called upon with signs of wonder,  
Passed with tenderest words away by ways un-  
known,

Not by sea-storm stricken down, nor touched of  
thunder,  
To the dark benign deep underworld, alone.

Third of three that ruled in Athens, kings with  
sceptral song for staff, [Ep. 3.  
Gladdest heart that God gave ever milk and wine of  
thought to quaff,  
Clearest eye that lightened ever to the broad lip's  
lordliest laugh,  
Praise be thine as theirs whose tragic brows the  
loftier leaf engirds  
For the live and lyric lightning of thy honey-hearted  
words,  
Soft like sunny dewy wings of clouds and bright as  
crying of birds ;  
Full of all sweet rays and notes that make of earth  
and air and sea  
One great light and sound of laughter from one great  
God's heart, to be  
Sign and semblance of the gladness of man's life  
where men breathe free.  
With no Loxian sound obscure God uttered once, and  
all time heard,  
All the soul of Athens, all the soul of England, in  
that word :  
Rome arose the second child of freedom : northward  
rose the third.  
Ere her Boreal dawn came kindling seas afoam and  
fields of snow,  
Yet again, while Europe groaned and grovelled, shone  
like suns aglow  
Doria splendid over Genoa, Venice bright with Dan-  
dolo.

Dead was Hellas, but Ausonia by the light of dead  
men's deeds  
Rose and walked awhile alive, though mocked as  
whom the fen-fire leads  
By the creed-wrought faith of faithless souls that  
mock their doubts with creeds.  
Dead are these, and man is risen again : and haply  
now the three  
Yet coequal and triune may stand in story, marked  
as free  
By the token of the washing of the waters of the  
sea.  
Athens first of all earth's kindred many-tongued and  
many-kinned  
Had the sea to friend and comfort, and for kinsman  
had the wind :  
She that bare Columbus next : then she that made  
her spoil of Ind.  
She that hears not what man's rage but only what  
the sea-wind saith :  
She that turned Spain's ships to cloud-wrack at the  
blasting of her breath,  
By her strengths of strong-souled children and of  
strong winds done to death.  
North and south the Great King's galleons went in  
Persian wise : and here  
She, with *Æschylean* music on her lips that laughed  
back fear,  
In the face of Time's grey godhead shook the splen-  
dour of her spear.  
Fair as Athens then with foot upon her foeman's  
front, and strong  
Even as Athens for redemption of the world from  
sovereign wrong,

Like as Athens crowned she stood before the sun  
with crowning song.

All the world is theirs with whom is freedom : first  
of all the free,

Blest are they whom song has crowned and clothed  
with blessing : these as we,

These alone have part in spirit with the sun that  
crowns the sea.

*April 1881.*



## THE STATUE OF VICTOR HUGO

## I

SINCE in Athens God stood plain for adoration,  
 Since the sun beheld his likeness reared in stone,  
 Since the bronze or gold of human consecration  
 Gave to Greece her guardian's form and feature  
 shown,  
 Never hand of sculptor, never heart of nation,  
 Found so glorious aim in all these ages flown  
 As is theirs who rear for all time's acclamation  
 Here the likeness of our mightiest and their own.

## 2

Theirs and ours and all men's living who behold him  
 Crowned with garlands multiform and manifold ;  
 Praise and thanksgiving of all mankind enfold him  
 Who for all men casts abroad his gifts of gold.  
 With the gods of song have all men's tongues enrolled  
 him,  
 With the helpful gods have all men's hearts  
 enrolled :  
 Ours he is who love him, ours whose hearts' hearts  
 hold him  
 Fast as his the trust that hearts like his may hold.

## 3

He, the heart most high, the spirit on earth most blameless,  
 Takes in charge all spirits, holds all hearts in trust :  
 As the sea-wind's on the sea his ways are tameless,  
 As the laws that steer the world his works are just.  
 All most noble feel him nobler, all most shameless  
 Feel his wrath and scorn make pale their pride and lust :  
 All most poor and lowliest, all whose wrongs were nameless,  
 Feel his word of comfort raise them from the dust.

## 4

Pride of place and lust of empire bloody-fruited  
 Knew the blasting of his breath on leaf and fruit :  
 Now the hand that smote the death-tree now disrooted  
 Plants the refuge-tree that has man's hope for root.  
 Ah, but we by whom his darkness was saluted,  
 How shall now all we that see his day salute ?  
 How should love not seem by love's own speech confuted,  
 Song before the sovereign singer not be mute ?

## 5

With what worship, by what blessing, in what measure,  
 May we sing of him, salute him, or adore,  
 With what hymn for praise, what thanksgiving for pleasure,  
 Who had given us more than heaven, and gives us more ?

Heaven's whole treasury, filled up full with night's  
 whole treasure,  
 Holds not so divine or deep a starry store  
 As the soul supreme that deals forth worlds at leisure  
 Clothed with light and darkness, dense with flower  
 and ore.

## 6

Song had touched the bourn : fresh verses over-  
 flow it,  
 Loud and radiant, waves on waves on waves that  
 throng ;  
 Still the tide grows, and the sea-mark still below it  
 Sinks and shifts and rises, changed and swept  
 along.  
 Rose it like a rock ? the waters overthrow it,  
 And another stands beyond them sheer and strong :  
 Goal by goal pays down its prize, and yields its poet  
 Tribute claimed of triumph, palm achieved of song.

## 7

Since his hand that holds the keys of fear and wonder  
 Opened on the high priest's dreaming eyes a door  
 Whence the lights of heaven and hell above and  
 under  
 Shone, and smote the face that men bow down  
 before,  
 Thrice again one singer's note had cloven in sunder  
 Night, who blows again not one blast now but  
 four,  
 And the fourfold heaven is kindled with his thunder,  
 And the stars about his forehead are fourscore.

## 8

From the deep soul's depths where alway love abounded

First had risen a song with healing on its wings  
 Whence the dews of mercy raining balms unbounded  
 Shed their last compassion even on sceptred things.<sup>1</sup>  
 Even on heads that like a curse the crown surrounded  
 Fell his crowning pity, soft as cleansing springs ;  
 And the sweet last note his wrath relenting sounded  
 Bade men's hearts be melted not for slaves but  
 kings.

## 9

Next, that faith might strengthen fear and love embolden,

On the creeds of priests a scourge of sunbeams fell :  
 And its flash made bare the deeps of heaven, beholden  
 Not of men that cry, Lord, Lord, from church or  
 cell.<sup>2</sup>

Hope as young as dawn from night obscure and olden  
 Rose again, such power abides in truth's one spell :  
 Night, if dawn it be that touches her, grows golden ;  
 Tears, if such as angels weep, extinguish hell.

## 10

Through the blind loud mills of barren blear-eyed  
 learning

Where in dust and darkness children's foreheads  
 bow,  
 While men's labour, vain as wind or water turning  
 Wheels and sails of dreams, makes life a leafless  
 bough,

<sup>1</sup> *La Pitié Suprême.* 1879.

<sup>2</sup> *Religions et Religion.* 1880.

Fell the light of scorn and pity touched with yearning,  
 Next, from words that shone as heaven's own kindling brow.<sup>1</sup>

Stars were these as watch-fires on the world's waste  
 burning,  
 Stars that fade not in the fourfold sunrise now.<sup>2</sup>

## 11

Now the voice that faints not till all wrongs be  
 wroken  
 Sounds as might the sun's song from the morning's  
 breast,  
 All the seals of silence sealed of night are broken,  
 All the winds that bear the fourfold word are blest.  
 All the keen fierce east flames forth one fiery token ;  
 All the north is loud with life that knows not rest,  
 All the south with song as though the stars had  
 spoken ;  
 All the judgment-fire of sunset scathes the west.

## 12

Sound of pæan, roll of chanted panegyric,  
 Though by Pindar's mouth song's trumpet spake  
 forth praise,  
 March of warrior songs in Pythian mood or Pyrrhic,  
 Though the blast were blown by lips of ancient  
 days,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Ane.* 1880.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit.* I. *Le Livre satirique.*  
 II. *Le Livre dramatique.* III. *Le Livre lyrique.* IV. *Le Livre épique.* 1881.

Ring not clearer than the clarion of satiric  
 Song whose breath sweeps bare the plague-infected  
 ways  
 Till the world be pure as heaven is for the lyric  
 Sun to rise up clothed with radiant sounds as rays.

## 13

Clear across the cloud-rack fluctuant and erratic  
 As the strong star smiles that lets no mourner  
 mourn,  
 Hymned alike from lips of Lesbian choirs or Attic  
 Once at evensong and morning newly born,  
 Clear and sure above the changes of dramatic  
 Tide and current, soft with love and keen with  
 scorn,  
 Smiles the strong sweet soul of maidenhood, ecstatic  
 And inviolate as the red glad mouth of morn.

## 14

Pure and passionate as dawn, whose apparition  
 Thrills with fire from heaven the wheels of hours  
 that whirl,  
 Rose and passed her radiance in serene transition  
 From his eyes who sought a grain and found a  
 pearl.  
 But the food by cunning hope for vain fruition  
 Lightly stolen away from keeping of a churl  
 Left the bitterness of death and hope's perdition  
 On the lip that scorn was wont for shame to curl.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Les Deux Trouvailles de Gallus.* I. *Margarita, comédie.*  
 II. *Esca, drame.*

## 15

Over waves that darken round the wave-worn rover  
 Rang his clarion higher than winds cried round  
 the ship,  
 Rose a pageant of set suns and storms blown over,  
 Hands that held life's guerdons fast or let them  
 slip.  
 But no tongue may tell, no thanksgiving discover,  
 Half the heaven of blessing, soft with clouds that  
 drip,  
 Keen with beams that kindle, dear as love to lover,  
 Opening by the spell's strength on his lyric lip.

## 16

By that spell the soul transfigured and dilated  
 Puts forth wings that widen, breathes a brightening  
 air,  
 Feeds on light and drinks of music, whence elated  
 All her sense grows godlike, seeing all depths made  
 bare,  
 All the mists wherein before she sat belated  
 Shrink, till now the sunlight knows not if they  
 were ;  
 All this earth transformed is Eden recreated,  
 With the breath of heaven remurmuring in her hair.

## 17

Sweeter far than aught of sweet that April nurses  
 Deep in dew-dropt woodland folded fast and furled  
 Breathes the fragrant song whose burning dawn  
 disperses  
 Darkness, like the surge of armies backward hurled,

Even as though the touch of spring's own hand, that  
 pierces  
 Earth with life's delight, had hidden in the im-  
 pearled  
 Golden bells and buds and petals of his verses  
 All the breath of all the flowers in all the world.

## 18

But the soul therein, the light that our souls follow,  
 Fires and fills the song with more of prophet's  
 pride,  
 More of life than all the gulfs of death may swallow,  
 More of flame than all the might of night may hide.  
 Though the whole dark age were loud and void and  
 hollow,  
 Strength of trust were here, and help for all souls  
 tried,  
 And a token from the flight of that strange swallow<sup>1</sup>  
 Whose migration still is toward the wintry side

## 19

Never came such token for divine solution  
 From the oraculous live darkness whence of yore  
 Ancient faith sought word of help and retribution,  
 Truth to lighten doubt, a sign to go before.  
 Never so baptismal waters of ablution  
 Bathed the brows of exile on so stern a shore,  
 Where the lightnings of the sea of revolution  
 Flashed across them ere its thunders yet might  
 roar.

<sup>1</sup> *Je suis une hirondelle étrange, car j'émigre  
 Du côté de l'hiver.*

By the lightning's light of present revelation  
 Shown, with epic thunder as from skies that frown,  
 Clothed in darkness as of darkling expiation,  
 Rose a vision of dead stars and suns gone down,  
 Whence of old fierce fire devoured the star-struck  
 nation,  
 Till its wrath and woe lit red the raging town,  
 Now made glorious with his statue's crowning station,  
 Where may never gleam again a viler crown.

King, with time for throne and all the years for pages,  
 He shall reign though all thrones else be over-  
 hurled,  
 Served of souls that have his living words for wages,  
 Crowned of heaven each dawn that leaves his brows  
 impeared ;  
 Girt about with robes unrent of storm that rages,  
 Robes not wrought with hands, from no loom's  
 weft unfurled ;  
 All the praise of all earth's tongues in all earth's ages,  
 All the love of all men's hearts in all the world.

Yet what hand shall carve the soul or cast the spirit,  
 Mould the face of fame, bid glory's feature glow ?  
 Who bequeath for eyes of ages hence to inherit  
 Him, the Master, whom love knows not if it know ?  
 Scarcely perfect praise of men man's work might  
 merit,  
 Scarcely bid such aim to perfect stature grow,  
 Were his hand the hand of Phidias who shall rear it,  
 And his soul the very soul of Angelo.

## 23

Michael, awful angel of the world's last session,  
 Once on earth, like him, with fire of suffering tried,  
 Thine it were, if man's it were, without transgression,  
 Thine alone, to take this toil upon thy pride.  
 Thine, whose heart was great against the world's  
 oppression,  
 Even as his whose word is lamp and staff and guide :  
 Advocate for man, untired of intercession,  
 Pleads his voice for slaves whose lords his voice  
 defied.

## 24

Earth, with all the kings and thralls on earth, below it,  
 Heaven alone, with all the worlds in heaven, above,  
 Let his likeness rise for suns and stars to know it,  
 High for men to worship, plain for men to love :  
 Brow that braved the tides which fain would over-  
 flow it,  
 Lip that gave the challenge, hand that flung the  
 glove ;  
 Comforter and prophet, Paraclete and poet,  
 Soul whose emblems are an eagle and a dove.

## 25

Sun, that hast not seen a loftier head wax hoary,  
 Earth, which hast not shown the sun a nobler birth,  
 Time, that hast not on thy scroll defiled and gory  
 One man's name writ brighter in its whole wide  
 girth,  
 Witness, till the final years fulfil their story,  
 Till the stars break off the music of their mirth,  
 What among the sons of men was this man's glory,  
 What the vesture of his soul revealed on earth.

# **SONNETS**



## HOPE AND FEAR

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,  
 With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,  
 Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer  
 Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men  
 grope  
 Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can  
 ope,  
 And makes for joy the very darkness dear  
 That gives her wide wings play ; nor dreams that  
 fear  
 At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.  
 Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,  
 May truth first purge her eyesight to discern  
 What once being known leaves time no power to  
 appal ;  
 Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn  
 The kind wise word that falls from years that  
 fall—  
 “Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all.”

## AFTER SUNSET

“Si quis piorum Manibus locus.”

## I

**Straight** from the sun’s grave in the deep clear west

A sweet strong wind blows, glad of life : and I,  
Under the soft keen stardawn whence the sky  
Takes life renewed, and all night’s godlike breast  
Palpitates, gradually revealed at rest

By growth and change of ardours felt on high,  
Make onward, till the last flame fall and die  
And all the world by night’s broad hand lie blest.  
Haply, meseems, as from that edge of death,  
Whereon the day lies dark, a brightening breath  
Blows more of benediction than the morn,  
So from the graves whereon grief gazing saith  
That half our heart of life there lies forlorn  
May light or breath at least of hope be born.

## II

The wind was soft before the sunset fled :

Now, while the cloud-enshrouded corpse of day  
Is lowered along a red funereal way  
Down to the dark that knows not white from red,

A clear sheer breeze against the night makes head,  
Serene, but sure of life as ere a ray  
Springs, or the dusk of dawn knows red from  
grey,  
Being as a soul that knows not quick from dead.  
From far beyond the sunset, far above,  
Full toward the starry soundless east it blows  
Bright as a child's breath breathing on a rose,  
Smooth to the sense as plume of any dove ;  
Till more and more as darkness grows and glows  
Silence and night seem likkest life and love.

## III

If light of life outlive the set of sun  
That men call death and end of all things, then  
How should not that which life held best for men  
And proved most precious, though it seem undone  
By force of death and woful victory won,  
Be first and surest of revival, when  
Death shall bow down to life arisen again ?  
So shall the soul seen be the self-same one  
That looked and spake with even such lips and eyes  
As love shall doubt not then to recognise,  
And all bright thoughts and smiles of all time  
past  
Revive, transfigured, but in spirit and sense  
None other than we knew, for evidence  
That love's last mortal word was not his last.

## A STUDY FROM MEMORY

If that be yet a living soul which here  
Seemed brighter for the growth of numbered  
springs  
And clothed by Time and Pain with goodlier  
things  
Each year it saw fulfilled a fresh fleet year,  
Death can have changed not aught that made it  
dear ;  
Half humorous goodness, grave-eyed mirth on  
wings  
Bright-balanced, blither-voiced than quiring  
strings ;  
Most radiant patience, crowned with conquering  
cheer ;  
A spirit inviolable that smiled and sang  
By might of nature and heroic need  
More sweet and strong than loftiest dream or  
deed ;  
A song that shone, a light whence music rang  
High as the sunniest heights of kindliest thought ;  
All these must be, or all she was be nought.

## TO DR. JOHN BROWN

BEYOND the north wind lay the land of old  
Where men dwelt blithe and blameless, clothed  
and fed  
With joy's bright raiment and with love's sweet  
bread,  
The whitest flock of earth's maternal fold.  
None there might wear about his brows enrolled  
A light of lovelier fame than rings your head,  
Whose lovesome love of children and the dead  
All men give thanks for : I far off behold  
A dear dead hand that links us, and a light  
The blithest and benignest of the night,  
The night of death's sweet sleep, wherein may be  
A star to show your spirit in present sight  
Some happier island in the Elysian sea  
Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie.

*March 1882.*

## TO WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

THE larks are loud above our leagues of whin  
Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold  
With odour like the colour : all the wold  
Is only light and song and wind wherein  
These twain are blent in one with shining din.  
And now your gift, a giver's kingly-souled,  
Dear old fast friend whose honours grow not old,  
Bids memory's note as loud and sweet begin.  
Though all but we from life be now gone forth  
Of that bright household in our joyous north  
Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,  
First met your hand ; yet under life's clear dome,  
Now seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend,  
Shines no less bright his full-sheaved harvest-home.

*April 20, 1882.*

## A DEATH ON EASTER DAY

THE strong spring sun rejoicingly may rise,  
Rise and make revel, as of old men said,  
Like dancing hearts of lovers newly wed :  
A light more bright than ever bathed the skies  
Departs for all time out of all men's eyes.  
The crowns that girt last night a living head  
Shine only now, though deathless, on the dead :  
Art that mocks death, and Song that never dies.  
Albeit the bright sweet mothlike wings be furled,  
Hope sees, past all division and defection,  
And higher than swims the mist of human  
breath,  
The soul most radiant once in all the world  
Requickened to regenerate resurrection  
Out of the likeness of the shadow of death.

*April 1882.*

## ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE AND GEORGE ELIOT

Two souls diverse out of our human sight  
Pass, followed one with love and each with  
wonder :  
The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,  
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might  
Of darkness and magnificence of night ;  
And one whose eye could smite the night in  
sunder,  
Searching if light or no light were thereunder,  
And found in love of loving-kindness light.  
Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire  
Still following Righteousness with deep desire  
Shone sole and stern before her and above,  
Sure stars and sole to steer by ; but more sweet  
Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,  
The light of little children, and their love.

**AFTER LOOKING INTO CARLYLE'S  
REMINISCENCES**

## I

THREE men lived yet when this dead man was young  
 Whose names and words endure for ever : one  
 Whose eyes grew dim with straining toward the  
 sun,  
 And his wings weakened, and his angel's tongue  
 Lost half the sweetest song was ever sung,  
 But like the strain half uttered earth hears none,  
 Nor shall man hear till all men's songs are done :  
 One whose clear spirit like an eagle hung  
 Between the mountains hallowed by his love  
 And the sky stainless as his soul above :  
 And one the sweetest heart that ever spake  
 'The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled.  
 These deathless names by this dead snake defiled  
 Bid memory spit upon him for their sake.

## II

Sweet heart, forgive me for thine own sweet sake,  
 Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,  
 And for my love's sake, powerless as I am  
 For love to praise thee, or like thee to make

Music of mirth where hearts less pure would break,  
Less pure than thine, our life-unspotted Lamb.  
Things hatefulest thou hadst not heart to damn,  
Nor wouldest have set thine heel on this dead snake.  
Let worms consume its memory with its tongue,  
The fang that stabbed fair Truth, the lip that stung  
Men's memories uncorroded with its breath.  
Forgive me, that with bitter words like his  
I mix the gentlest English name that is,  
The tenderest held of all that know not death.

## A LAST LOOK

SICK of self-love, Malvolio, like an owl  
That hoots the sun risen where starlight sank,  
With German garters crossed athwart thy frank  
Stout Scottish legs, men watched thee snarl and  
scowl,  
And boys responsive with reverberate howl  
Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank  
And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank  
And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul.  
Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given  
Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,  
Son of the storm and darkness, pass in peace.  
Peace upon earth thou knewest not: now, being  
dead,  
Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head,  
Where high-strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

## DICKENS

CHIEF in thy generation born of men  
Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,  
With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of  
morn  
For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then  
When thoughts of children warmed their light, or  
when  
Reverence of age with love and labour worn,  
Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,  
Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live  
pen :  
Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,  
Higher even than here, though highest was here  
thy place,  
Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine  
With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne  
And Fielding's kindliest might and Goldsmith's  
grace ;  
Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

ON LAMB'S SPECIMENS OF DRAMATIC  
POETS

## I

IF all the flowers of all the fields on earth  
 By wonder-working summer were made one,  
 Its fragrance were not sweeter in the sun,  
 Its treasure-house of leaves were not more worth  
 Than those wherfrom thy light of musing mirth  
 Shone, till each leaf whereon thy pen would run  
 Breathed life, and all its breath was benison.  
 Beloved beyond all names of English birth,  
 More dear than mightier memories ; gentlest name  
 That ever clothed itself with flower-sweet fame,  
 Or linked itself with loftiest names of old  
 By right and might of loving ; I, that am  
 Less than the least of those within thy fold,  
 Give only thanks for them to thee, Charles Lamb.

## II

So many a year had borne its own bright bees  
 And slain them since thy honey-bees were hived,  
 John Day, in cells of flower-sweet verse contrived  
 So well with craft of moulding melodies,

Thy soul perchance in amaranth fields at ease  
Thought not to hear the sound on earth revived  
Of summer music from the spring derived  
When thy song sucked the flower of flowering trees.  
But thine was not the chance of every day :  
Time, after many a darkling hour, grew sunny,  
And light between the clouds ere sunset swam,  
Laughing, and kissed their darkness all away,  
When, touched and tasted and approved, thy honey  
Took subtler sweetness from the lips of Lamb.

## TO JOHN NICHOL

## I

FRIEND of the dead, and friend of all my days  
 Even since they cast off boyhood, I salute  
 The song saluting friends whose songs are mute  
 With full burnt-offerings of clear-spirited praise.  
 That since our old young years our several ways  
 Have led through fields diverse of flower and fruit,  
 Yet no cross wind has once relaxed the root  
 We set long since beneath the sundawn's rays,  
 The root of trust whence towered the trusty tree,  
 Friendship—this only and duly might impel  
 My song to salutation of your own ;  
 More even than praise of one unseen of me  
 And loved—the starry spirit of Dobell,  
 To mine by light and music only known.

## II

But more than this what moves me most of all  
 To leave not all unworded and unsped  
 The whole heart's greeting of my thanks unsaid  
 Scarce needs this sign, that from my tongue should  
 fall

His name whom sorrow and reverent love recall,  
The sign to friends on earth of that dear head  
Alive, which now long since untimely dead  
The wan grey waters covered for a pall.  
Their trustless reaches dense with tangling stems  
Took never life more taintless of rebuke,  
More pure and perfect, more serene and kind,  
Than when those clear eyes closed beneath the  
Thames,  
And made the now more hallowed name of Luke  
Memorial to us of morning left behind.

*May 1881*

## DYSTHANATOS

*Ad generem Cereris sine cæde et vulnere pauci  
Descendunt reges, aut siccâ morte tyranni.*

By no dry death another king goes down  
 The way of kings. Yet may no free man's voice,  
 For stern compassion and deep awe, rejoice  
 That one sign more is given against the crown,  
 That one more head those dark red waters drown  
 Which rise round thrones whose trembling equi-  
 poise  
 Is propped on sand and bloodshed and such toys  
 As human hearts that shrink at human frown.  
 The name writ red on Polish earth, the star  
 That was to outshine our England's in the far  
 East heaven of empire—where is one that saith  
 Proud words now, prophesying of this White Czar?  
 “In bloodless pangs few kings yield up their  
 breath,  
 Few tyrants perish by no violent death.”

*March 14, 1881*

## EUONYMOS

*εδ μὴν δι τιμὴν ἐδίδου νικηφόρος ἀλκὴ  
ἐκ νίκης δνομ' ἔσχε φόβου κέαρ αἰὲν ἀθικτος.*

A YEAR ago red wrath and keen despair  
 Spake, and the sole word from their darkness sent  
 Laid low the lord not all omnipotent  
 Who stood most like a god of all that were  
 As gods for pride of power, till fire and air  
 Made earth of all his godhead. Lightning rent  
 The heart of empire's lurid firmament,  
 And laid the mortal core of manhood bare.  
 But when the calm crowned head that all revere  
 For valour higher than that which casts out fear,  
 Since fear came near it never, comes near death,  
 Blind murder cowers before it, knowing that here  
 No braver soul drew bright and queenly breath  
 Since England wept upon Elizabeth.

*March 8, 1882.*

## ON THE RUSSIAN PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS

O son of man, by lying tongues adored,  
By slaughterous hands of slaves with feet red-shod  
In carnage deep as ever Christian trod  
Profaned with prayer and sacrifice abhorred  
And incense from the trembling tyrant's hord,  
Brute worshippers or wielders of the rod,  
Most murderous even of all that call thee God,  
Most treacherous even that ever called thee Lord ;  
Face loved of little children long ago,  
Head hated of the priests and rulers then,  
If thou see this, or hear these hounds of thine  
Run ravening as the Gadarean swine,  
Say, was not this thy Passion, to foreknow  
In death's worst hour the works of Christian men ?

*January 23, 1882.*

## BISMARCK AT CANOSSA

NOT all disgraced, in that Italian town,  
The imperial German cowered beneath thine hand,  
Alone indeed imperial Hildebrand,  
And felt thy foot and Rome's, and felt her frown  
And thine, more strong and sovereign than his crown,  
Though iron forged its blood-encrusted band.  
But now the princely wielder of his land,  
For hatred's sake toward freedom, so bows down,  
No strength is in the foot to spurn : its tread  
Can bruise not now the proud submitted head :  
But how much more abased, much lower brought  
low,  
And more intolerably humiliated,  
The neck submissive of the prosperous foe,  
Than his whom scorn saw shuddering in the snow !

*December 31, 1881.*

## QUIA NOMINOR LEO

## I

WHAT part is left thee, lion? Ravenous beast,  
 Which hadst the world for pasture, and for scope  
 And compass of thine homicidal hope  
 The kingdom of the spirit of man, the feast  
 Of souls subdued from west to sunless east,  
 From blackening north to bloodred south aslope,  
 All servile; earth for footcloth of the pope,  
 And heaven for chancel-ceiling of the priest;  
 Thou that hadst earth by right of rack and rod,  
 Thou that hadst Rome because thy name was God,  
 And by thy creed's gift heaven wherein to dwell;  
 Heaven laughs with all his light and might above  
 That earth has cast thee out of faith and love;  
 Thy part is but the hollow dream of hell.

## II

The light of life has faded from thy cause,  
 High priest of heaven and hell and purgatory:  
 Thy lips are loud with strains of oldworld story,  
 But the red prey was rent out of thy paws

Long since : and they that dying brake down thy laws  
Have with the fires of death-enkindled glory  
Put out the flame that faltered on thy hoary  
High altars, waning with the world's applause.  
This Italy was Dante's : Bruno died  
Here : Campanella, too sublime for pride,  
Endured thy God's worst here, and hence went home.  
And what art thou, that time's full tide should shrink  
For thy sake downward ? What art thou, to think  
Thy God shall give thee back for birthright Rome ?

*January 1882.*

### THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

Not for less love, all glorious France, to thee,  
    "Sweet enemy" called in days long since at end,  
    Now found and hailed of England sweeter friend,  
Bright sister of our freedom now, being free ;  
Not for less love or faith in friendship we  
    Whose love burnt ever toward thee reprehend  
    The vile vain greed whose pursy dreams portend  
Between our shores suppression of the sea.  
Not by dull toil of blind mechanic art  
    Shall these be linked for no man's force to part  
    Nor length of years and changes to divide,  
But union only of trust and loving heart  
    And perfect faith in freedom strong to abide  
    And spirit at one with spirit on either side.

*April 3, 1882.*

## SIR WILLIAM GOMM

## I

AT threescore years and five aroused anew  
 To rule in India, forth a soldier went  
 On whose bright-fronted youth fierce war had spent  
 Its iron stress of storm, till glory grew  
 Full as the red sun waned on Waterloo.

Landing, he met the word from England sent  
 Which bade him yield up rule : and he, content,  
 Resigned it, as a mightier warrior's due ;  
 And wrote as one rejoicing to record  
 That "from the first" his royal heart was lord  
 Of its own pride or pain ; that thought was none  
 Therein save this, that in her perilous strait  
 England, whose womb brings forth her sons so great,  
 Should choose to serve her first her mightiest son.

## II

Glory beyond all flight of warlike fame  
 Go with the warrior's memory who preferred  
 To praise of men whereby men's hearts are stirred,  
 And acclamation of his own proud name

With blare of trumpet-blasts and sound and flame  
Of pageant honour, and the titular word  
That only wins men worship of the herd,  
His country's sovereign good ; who overcame  
Pride, wrath, and hope of all high chance on earth,  
For this land's love that gave his great heart birth.  
O nursling of the sea-winds and the sea,  
Immortal England, goddess ocean-born,  
What shall thy children fear, what strengths not scorn,  
While children of such mould are born to thee ?

## EUTHANATOS

## IN MEMORY OF MRS. THELLUSSON

FORTH of our ways and woes,  
 Forth of the winds and snows,  
 A white soul soaring goes,  
 Winged like a dove :  
 So sweet, so pure, so clear,  
 So heavenly tempered here,  
 Love need not hope or fear her changed above

Ere dawned her day to die,  
 So heavenly, that on high  
 Change could not glorify  
 Nor death refine her :  
 Pure gold of perfect love,  
 On earth like heaven's own dove,  
 She cannot wear, above, a smile diviner.

Her voice in heaven's own quite  
 Can sound no heavenlier lyre  
 Than here : no purer fire  
 Her soul can soar :  
 No sweeter stars her eyes  
 In unimagined skies  
 Beyond our sight can rise than here before.

Hardly long years had shed  
Their shadows on her head :  
Hardly we think her dead,  
    Who hardly thought her  
Old : hardly can believe  
    The grief our hearts receive  
And wonder while they grieve, as wrong were wrought  
    her.

But though strong grief be strong  
No word or thought of wrong  
May stain the trembling song,  
    Wring the bruised heart,  
That sounds or sighs its faint  
    Low note of love, nor taint  
Grief for so sweet a saint, when such depart.

A saint whose perfect soul,  
With perfect love for goal,  
Faith hardly might control,  
    Creeds might not harden :  
A flower more splendid far  
    Than the most radiant star  
Seen here of all that are in God's own garden.

Surely the stars we see  
Rise and relapse as we,  
And change and set, may be  
    But shadows too :  
But spirits that man's lot  
    Could neither mar nor spot  
Like these false lights are not, being heavenly true.

Not like these dying lights  
Of worlds whose glory smites  
The passage of the nights  
    Through heaven's blind prison :  
Not like their souls who see,  
    If thought fly far and free,  
No heavenlier heaven to be for souls risen.

A soul wherein love shone  
Even like the sun, alone,  
With fervour of its own  
    And splendour fed,  
Made by no creeds less kind  
    Toward souls by none confined,  
Could Death's self quench or blind, Love's self were  
    dead.

*February 4, 1881.*

## FIRST AND LAST

UPON the borderlands of being,  
 Where life draws hardly breath  
 Between the lights and shadows fleeing  
 Fast as a word one saith,  
 Two flowers rejoice our eyesight, seeing  
 The dawns of birth and death.

Behind the babe his dawn is lying  
 Half risen with notes of mirth  
 From all the winds about it flying  
 Through new-born heaven and earth :  
 Before bright age his day for dying  
 Dawns equal-eyed with birth.

Equal the dews of even and dawn,  
 Equal the sun's eye seen  
 A hand's breadth risen and half withdrawn :  
 But no bright hour between  
 Brings aught so bright by stream or lawn  
 To noonday growths of green.

Which flower of life may smell the sweeter  
 To love's insensual sense,  
 Which fragrance move with offering meeter  
 His soothed omnipotence,  
 Being chosen as fairer or as fleeter,  
 Borne hither or borne hence,

Love's foiled omniscience knows not : this  
Were more than all he knows  
With all his lore of bale and bliss,  
The choice of rose and rose,  
One red as lips that touch with his,  
One white as moonlit snows.

No hope is half so sweet and good,  
No dream of saint or sage  
So fair as these are : no dark mood  
But these might best assuage ;  
The sweet red rose of babyhood,  
The white sweet rose of age.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD  
JOHN TRELAWNY

LAST high star of the years whose thunder  
Still men's listening remembrance hears,  
Last light left of our fathers' years,  
Watched with honour and hailed with wonder  
Thee too then have the years borne under.  
Thou too then hast regained thy peers.

Wings that warred with the winds of morning,  
Storm-winds rocking the red great dawn,  
Close at last, and a film is drawn  
Over the eyes of the storm-bird, scorning  
Now no longer the loud wind's warning,  
Waves that threaten or waves that fawn.

Peers were none of thee left us living,  
Peers of theirs we shall see no more.  
Eight years over the full fourscore  
Knew thee : now shalt thou sleep, forgiving  
All griefs past of the wild world's giving,  
Moored at last on the stormless shore.

Worldwide liberty's lifelong lover,  
Lover no less of the strength of song,  
Sea-king, swordsman, hater of wrong,  
Over thy dust that the dust shall cover  
Comes my song as a bird to hover,  
Borne of its will as of wings along.

Cherished of thee were this brief song's brothers  
Now that follows them, cherishing thee.  
Over the tides and the tideless sea  
Soft as a smile of the earth our mother's  
Flies it faster than all those others,  
First of the troop at thy tomb to be.

Memories of Greece and the mountain's hollow  
Guarded alone of thy loyal sword  
Hold thy name for our hearts in ward :  
Yet more fain are our hearts to follow  
One way now with the southward swallow  
Back to the grave of the man their lord.

Heart of hearts, art thou moved not, hearing  
Surely, if hearts of the dead may hear,  
Whose true heart it is now draws near ?  
Surely the sense of it thrills thee, cheering  
Darkness and death with the news now nearing—  
Shelley, Trelawny rejoins thee here.

## ADIEUX À MARIE STUART

## I

QUEEN, for whose house my fathers fought,  
 With hopes that rose and fell,  
 Red star of boyhood's fiery thought,  
 Farewell.

They gave their lives, and I, my queen,  
 Have given you of my life,  
 Seeing your brave star burn high between  
 Men's strife.

The strife that lightened round their spears  
 Long since fell still : so long  
 Hardly may hope to last in years  
 My song.

But still through strife of time and thought  
 Your light on me too fell :  
 Queen, in whose name we sang or fought,  
 Farewell.

## II

There beats no heart on either border  
 Wherethrough the north blasts blow  
 But keeps your memory as a warder  
 His beacon-fire aglow.

Long since it fired with love and wonder  
 Mine, for whose April age  
 Blithe midsummer made banquet under  
 The shade of Hermitage.

Soft sang the burn's blithe notes, that gather  
 Strength to ring true :  
 And air and trees and sun and heather  
 Remembered you.

Old border ghosts of fight or fairy  
 Or love or teen,  
 These they forgot, remembering Mary  
 The Queen.

## III

Queen once of Scots and ever of ours  
 Whose sires brought forth for you  
 Their lives to strew your way like flowers,  
 Adieu.

Dead is full many a dead man's name  
 Who died for you this long  
 Time past : shall this too fare the same.  
 My song ?

But surely, though it die or live,  
 Your face was worth  
 All that a man may think to give  
 On earth.

No darkness cast of years between  
 Can darken you :  
 Man's love will never bid my queen  
 Adieu.

## IV

Love hangs like light about your name  
As music round the shell :  
No heart can take of you a tame  
Farewell.

Yet, when your very face was seen,  
Ill gifts were yours for giving :  
Love gat strange guerdons of my queen  
When living.

O diamond heart unflawed and clear,  
The whole world's crowning jewel !  
Was ever heart so deadly dear  
So cruel ?

Yet none for you of all that bled  
Grudged once one drop that fell :  
Not one to life reluctant said  
Farewell.

## V

Strange love they have given you, love disloyal,  
Who mock with praise your name,  
To leave a head so rare and royal  
Too low for praise or blame.

You could not love nor hate, they tell us,  
You had nor sense nor sting :  
In God's name, then, what plague befell us  
To fight for such a thing ?

“ Some faults the gods will give,” to fetter  
 Man’s highest intent :  
 But surely you were something better  
 Than innocent !

No maid that strays with steps unwary  
 Through snares unseen,  
 But one to live and die for ; Mary,  
 The Queen.

## VI

Forgive them all their praise, who blot  
 Your fame with praise of you :  
 Then love may say, and falter not,  
 Adieu.

Yet some you hardly would forgive  
 Who did you much less wrong  
 Once : but resentment should not live  
 Too long.

They never saw your lip’s bright bow,  
 Your swordbright eyes,  
 The bluest of heavenly things below  
 The skies.

Clear eyes that love’s self finds most like  
 A swordblade’s blue,  
 A swordblade’s ever keen to strike,  
 Adieu.

## VII

Though all things breathe or sound of fight  
That yet make up your spell,  
To bid you were to bid the light  
Farewell.

Farewell the song says only, being  
A star whose race is run :  
Farewell the soul says never, seeing  
The sun.

Yet, wellnigh as with flash of tears,  
The song must say but so  
That took your praise up twenty years  
Ago.

More bright than stars or moons that vary,  
Sun kindling heaven and hell,  
Here, after all these years, Queen Mary,  
Farewell.

## HERSE

WHEN grace is given us ever to behold  
 A child some sweet months old,  
 Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,  
 Smiling, with bated breath,  
 Hush ! for the holiest thing that lives is here,  
 And heaven's own heart how near !  
 How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,  
 Gaze on this verier one ?  
 Heart, hold thy peace ; eyes, be cast down for  
 shame ;  
 Lips, breathe not yet its name.  
 In heaven they know what name to call it ; we,  
 How should we know ? For, see !  
 The adorable sweet living marvellous  
 Strange light that lightens us  
 Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,  
 Full in a babe's warm face !  
 All roses that the morning rears are nought,  
 All stars not worth a thought,  
 Set this one star against them, or suppose  
 As rival this one rose.  
 What price could pay with earth's whole weight of  
 gold  
 One least flushed roseleaf's fold  
 Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine  
 From each warm curve and line,

Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to reillum  
The dappled rose-red bloom  
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet  
Clenched hands and curled-up feet,  
That on the roses of the dawn have trod  
As they came down from God,  
And keep the flush and colour that the sky  
Takes when the sun comes nigh,  
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace  
Evoked on God's own face  
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,  
He saw that it was good?  
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,  
And mere men's love too vile  
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims  
Read o'er the little limbs,  
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,  
Rejoice, revere, adore,  
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,  
Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.  
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,  
Even to draw nigh its head,  
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise  
Its mild miraculous eyes  
Out of their viewless vision—O, what then,  
What may be said of men?  
What speech may name a new-born child? what  
word  
Earth ever spake or heard?  
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew  
Called that a drop of dew  
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb  
Came forth in blameless bloom.  
We have no word, as had those men most high,  
To call a baby by.

Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas—  
A better word than these,  
A better sign it was than flower or gem  
That love revealed to them :  
They knew that whence comes light or quickening  
flame,  
Thence only this thing came,  
And only might be likened of our love  
To somewhat born above,  
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,  
Only to dew's own birth.  
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,  
Babe, when we gaze on you,  
A dew-drop out of heaven whose colours are  
More bright than sun or star,  
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,  
Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,  
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.  
O child, what news from heaven ?

## TWINS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO W. M. R. AND L. R.

APRIL, on whose wings  
 Ride all gracious things,  
 Like the star that brings  
 All things good to man,  
 Ere his light, that yet  
 Makes the month shine, set,  
 And fair May forget  
 Whence her birth began,

Brings, as heart would choose,  
 Sound of golden news,  
 Bright as kindling dews  
 When the dawn begins ;  
 Tidings clear as mirth,  
 Sweet as air and earth  
 Now that hail the birth,  
 Twice thus blest, of twins.

In the lovely land  
 Where with hand in hand  
 Lovers wedded stand  
 Other joys before  
 Made your mixed life sweet :  
 Now, as Time sees meet,  
 Three glad blossoms greet  
 Two glad blossoms more.

Fed with sun and dew,  
 While your joys were new,  
 First arose and grew

One bright olive-shoot :  
 Then a fair and fine  
 Slip of warm-haired pine  
 Felt the sweet sun shine  
 On its leaf and fruit.

And it wore for mark  
 Graven on the dark  
 Beauty of its bark  
 That the noblest name  
 Worn in song of old  
 By the king whose bold  
 Hand had fast in hold  
 All the flower of fame.

Then, with southern skies  
 Flattered in her eyes,  
 Which, in lovelier wise  
 Yet, reflect their blue  
 Brightened more, being bright  
 Here with life's delight,  
 And with love's live light  
 Glorified anew,

Came, as fair as came  
 One who bore her name  
 (She that broke as flame  
 From the swan-shell white),  
 Crowned with tender hair  
 Only, but more fair  
 Than all queens that were  
 Themes of oldworld fight,

Of your flowers the third  
Bud, or new-fledged bird  
In your hearts' nest heard  
    Murmuring like a dove  
Bright as those that drew  
Over waves where blew  
No loud wind the blue  
    Heaven-hued car of love.

Not the glorious grace  
Even of that one face  
Potent to displace  
    All the towers of Troy  
Surely shone more clear  
Once with childlike cheer  
Than this child's face here  
    Now with living joy.

After these again  
Here in April's train  
Breaks the bloom of twain  
    Blossoms in one birth  
For a crown of May  
On the front of day  
When he takes his way  
    Over heaven and earth.

Half a heavenly thing  
Given from heaven to Spring  
By the sun her king,  
    Half a tender toy,  
Seems a child of curl  
Yet too soft to twirl ;  
Seems the flower-sweet girl  
    By the flower-bright boy.

All the kind gods' grace,  
 All their love, embrace  
 Ever either face,  
 Ever brood above them :  
 All soft wings of hours  
 Screen them as with flowers  
 From all beams and showers :  
 All life's seasons love them.

When the dews of sleep  
 Falling lightliest keep  
 Eyes too close to peep  
 Forth and laugh off rest,  
 Joy from face to feet  
 Fill them, as is meet :  
 Life to them be sweet  
 As their mother's breast.

When those dews are dry,  
 And in day's bright eye  
 Looking full they lie  
 Bright as rose and pearl,  
 All returns of joy  
 Pure of time's alloy  
 Bless the rose-red boy,  
 Guard the rose-white girl

## POSTSCRIPT

Friends, if I could take  
 Half a note from Blake  
 Or but one verse make  
 Of the Conqueror's mine,

Better than my best  
Song above your nest  
I would sing : the quest  
Now seems too divine.

*April 28, 1881.*

## THE SALT OF THE EARTH

If childhood were not in the world,  
But only men and women grown ;  
No baby-locks in tendrils curled,  
No baby-blossoms blown ;

Though men were stronger, women fairer,  
And nearer all delights in reach,  
And verse and music uttered rarer  
Tones of more godlike speech ;

Though the utmost life of life's best hours  
Found, as it cannot now find, words ;  
Though desert sands were sweet as flower:  
And flowers could sing like birds,

But children never heard them, never  
They felt a child's foot leap and run  
This were a drearier star than ever  
Yet looked upon the sun.

## SEVEN YEARS OLD

## I

SEVEN white roses on one tree,  
 Seven white loaves of blameless leaven,  
 Seven white sails on one soft sea,  
 Seven white swans on one lake's lee,  
 Seven white flowerlike stars in heaven,  
 All are types unmeet to be  
 For a birthday's crown of seven.

## II

Not the radiance of the roses,  
 Not the blessing of the bread,  
 Not the breeze that ere day grows is  
 Fresh for sails and swans, and closes  
 Wings above the sun's grave spread,  
 When the starshine on the snows is  
 Sweet as sleep on sorrow shed,

## III

Nothing sweetest, nothing best,  
 Holds so good and sweet a treasure  
 As the love wherewith once blest  
 Joy grows holy, grief takes rest.  
 Life, half tired with hours to measure,  
 Fills his eyes and lips and breast  
 With most light and breath of pleasure

## IV

As the rapture unpolluted,  
 As the passion undefiled,  
 By whose force all pains heart-rooted  
 Are transfigured and transmuted,  
 Recompensed and reconciled,  
 Through the imperial, undisputed,  
 Present godhead of a child.

## V

Brown bright eyes and fair bright head,  
 Worth a worthier crown than this is,  
 Worth a worthier song instead,  
 Sweet grave wise round mouth, full fed  
 With the joy of love, whose bliss is  
 More than mortal wine and bread,  
 Lips whose words are sweet as kisses,

## VI

Little hands so glad of giving,  
 Little heart so glad of love,  
 Little soul so glad of living,  
 While the strong swift hours are weaving  
 Light with darkness woven above,  
 Time for mirth and time for grieving,  
 Plume of raven and plume of dove,

## VII

I can give you but a word  
 Warm with love therein for leaven,  
 But a song that falls unheard  
 Yet on ears of sense unstirred  
 Yet by song so far from heaven,  
 Whence you came the brightest bird,  
 Seven years since, of seven times seven.

## EIGHT YEARS OLD

## I

SUN, whom the faltering snow-cloud fears,

Rise, let the time of year be May,  
Speak now the word that April hears,

Let March have all his royal way ;  
Bid all spring raise in winter's ears

All tunes her children hear or play,  
Because the crown of eight glad years  
On one bright head is set to-day.

## II

What matters cloud or sun to-day

To him who wears the wreath of years  
So many, and all like flowers at play

With wind and sunshine, while his ears  
Hear only song on every way ?

More sweet than spring triumphant hears  
Ring through the revel-rout of May  
Are these, the notes that winter fears.

## III

Strong-hearted winter knows and fears

The music made of love at play,  
Or haply loves the tune he hears  
From hearts fulfilled with flowering May,

Whose molten music thaw's his ears  
 Late frozen, deaf but yesterday  
 To sounds of dying and dawning years,  
 Now quickened on his deathward way.

## IV

For deathward now lies winter's way  
 Down the green vestibule of years  
 That each year brightens day by day  
 With flower and shower till hope scarce fears  
 And fear grows wholly hope of May.  
 But we—the music in our ears  
 Made of love's pulses as they play  
 The heart alone that makes it hears.

## V

The heart it is that plays and hears  
 High salutation of to-day.  
 Tongue falters, hand shrinks back, song fears  
 Its own unworthiness to play  
 Fit music for those eight sweet years,  
 Or sing their blithe accomplished way.  
 No song quite worth a young child's ears  
 Broke ever even from birds in May.

## VI

There beats not in the heart of May,  
 When summer hopes and springtide fears,  
 There falls not from the height of day,  
 When sunlight speaks and silence hears,

So sweet a psalm as children play  
And sing, each hour of all their years,  
Each moment of their lovely way,  
And know not how it thrills our ears.

## VII

Ah child, what are we, that our ears  
Should hear you singing on your way,  
Should have this happiness? The years  
Whose hurrying wings about us play  
Are not like yours, whose flower-time fears  
Nought worse than sunlit showers in May,  
Being sinless as the spring, that hears  
Her own heart praise her every day.

## VIII

Yet we too triumph in the day  
That bare, to entrance our eyes and ears,  
To lighten daylight, and to play  
Such notes as darkness knows and fears,  
The child whose face illumines our way,  
Whose voice lifts up the heart that hears,  
Whose hand is as the hand of May  
To bring us flowers from eight full years.

## COMPARISONS

**CHILD**, when they say that others  
 Have been or are like you,  
 Babes fit to be your brothers,  
 Sweet human drops of dew,  
 Bright fruit of mortal mothers,  
 What should one say or do?

We know the thought is treason,  
 We feel the dream absurd ;  
 A claim rebuked of reason,  
 That withers at a word :  
 For never shone the season  
 That bore so blithe a bird.

Some smiles may seem as merry,  
 Some glances gleam as wise,  
 From lips as like a cherry  
 And scarce less gracious eyes ;  
 Eyes browner than a berry,  
 Lips red as morning's rise.

But never yet rang laughter  
 So sweet in gladdened ears  
 Through wall and floor and rafter  
 As all this household hears  
 And rings response thereafter  
 Till cloudiest weather clears.

When those your chosen of all men,  
Whose honey never cloys,  
Two lights whose smiles enthrall men,  
Were called at your age boys,  
Those mighty men, while small men,  
Could make no merrier noise.

Our Shakespeare, surely, daffed not  
More lightly pain aside  
From radiant lips that quaffed not  
Of forethought's tragic tide :  
Our Dickens, doubtless, laughed not  
More loud with life's first pride.

The dawn were not more cheerless  
With neither light nor dew  
Than we without the fearless  
Clear laugh that thrills us through :  
If ever child stood peerless,  
Love knows that child is you.

## WHAT IS DEATH?

LOOKING on a page where stood  
Graven of old on old-world wood  
Death, and by the grave's edge grim,  
Pale, the young man facing him,  
Asked my well-beloved of me  
Once what strange thing this might be,  
Gaunt and great of limb.

Death, I told him : and, surprise  
Deepening more his wildwood eyes  
(Like some sweet fleet thing's whose breath  
Speaks all spring though nought it saith),  
Up he turned his rosebright face  
Glorious with its seven years' grace,  
Asking—What is death?

## A CHILD'S PITY

No sweeter thing than children's ways and wiles,  
Surely, we say, can gladden eyes and ears :  
Yet sometime sweeter than their words or smiles  
Are even their tears.

To one for once a piteous tale was read,  
How, when the murderous mother crocodile  
Was slain, her fierce brood famished, and lay dead,  
Starved, by the Nile.

In vast green reed-beds on the vast grey slime  
Those monsters motherless and helpless lay,  
Perishing only for the parent's crime  
Whose seed were they.

Hours after, toward the dusk, our blithe small bird  
Of Paradise, who has our hearts in keeping,  
Was heard or seen, but hardly seen or heard,  
For pity weeping.

He was so sorry, sitting still apart,  
For the poor little crocodiles, he said.  
Six years had given him, for an angel's heart,  
A child's instead.

Feigned tears the false beasts shed for murderous  
ends,

We know from travellers' tales of crocodiles :  
But these tears wept upon them of my friend's  
Outshine his smiles.

What heavenliest angels of what heavenly city  
Could match the heavenly heart in children here ?  
The heart that hallowing all things with its pity  
Casts out all fear ?

So lovely, so divine, so dear their laughter  
Seems to us, we know not what could be more  
dear :

But lovelier yet we see the sign thereafter  
Of such a tear.

With sense of love half laughing and half weeping  
We met your tears, our small sweet-spirited  
friend :

Let your love have us in its heavenly keeping  
To life's last end.

### A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

ALL the bells of heaven may ring,  
 All the birds of heaven may sing,  
 All the wells on earth may spring,  
 All the winds on earth may bring  
     All sweet sounds together ;  
 Sweeter far than all things heard,  
 Hand of harper, tone of bird,  
 Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,  
 Welling water's winsome word,  
     Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none  
 Hearing ere its chime be done  
 Knows not well the sweetest one  
 Heard of man beneath the sun,  
     Hoped in heaven hereafter ;  
 Soft and strong and loud and light,  
 Very sound of very light  
 Heard from morning's rosiest height,  
 When the soul of all delight  
     Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled  
Never forth such notes, nor told  
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,  
As the radiant mouth of gold  
    Here that rings forth heaven.  
If the golden-crested wren  
Were a nightingale—why, then,  
Something seen and heard of men  
Might be half as sweet as when  
    Laughs a child of seven.

## A CHILD'S THANKS

How low soe'er men rank us,  
 How high soe'er we win,  
 The children far above us  
 Dwell, and they deign to love us,  
 With lovelier love than ours,  
 And smiles more sweet than flowers ;  
 As though the sun should thank us  
 For letting light come in.

With too divine complaisance,  
 Whose grace misleads them thus,  
 Being gods, in heavenly blindness  
 They call our worship kindness,  
 Our pebble-gift a gem :  
 They think us good to them,  
 Whose glance, whose breath, whose presence,  
 Are gifts too good for us.

The poet high and hoary  
 Of meres that mountains bind  
 Felt his great heart more often  
 Yearn, and its proud strength soften  
 From stern to tenderer mood,  
 At thought of gratitude  
 Shown than of song or story  
 He heard of hearts unkind.

## A CHILD'S THANKS

But with what words for token  
And what adoring tears  
Of reverence risen to passion,  
In what glad prostrate fashion  
Of spirit and soul subdued,  
May man show gratitude  
For thanks of children spoken  
That hover in his ears ?

The angels laugh, your brothers,  
Child, hearing you thank me,  
With eyes whence night grows sunny,  
And touch of lips like honey,  
And words like honey-dew :  
But how shall I thank you ?  
For gifts above all others  
What guerdon-gift may be ?

What wealth of words caressing,  
What choice of songs found best,  
Would seem not as derision,  
Found vain beside the vision  
And glory from above  
Shown in a child's heart's love ?  
His part in life is blessing ;  
Ours, only to be blest.

## A CHILD'S BATTLES

*πῦξ ἀρετὰν εὑρών.*—PINDAR.

PRAISE of the knights of old  
 May sleep : their tale is told,  
     And no man cares :  
 The praise which fires our lips is  
 A knight's whose fame eclipses  
     All of theirs.

The ruddiest light in heaven  
 Blazed as his birth-star seven  
     Long years ago :  
 All glory crown that old year  
 Which brought our stout small soldier  
     With the snow !

Each baby born has one  
 Star, for his friends a sun,  
     The first of stars :  
 And we, the more we scan it,  
 The more grow sure your planet,  
     Child, was Mars.

For each one flower, perchance,  
 Blooms as his cognizance :  
     The snowdrop chill,

The violet un beholden,  
For some : for you the golden  
Daffodil.

Erect, a fighting flower,  
It breasts the breeziest hour  
That ever blew.  
And bent or broke things brittle  
Or frail, unlike a little  
Knight like you.

Its flower is firm and fresh  
And stout like sturdiest flesh  
Of children : all  
The strenuous blast that parches  
Spring hurts it not till March is  
Near his fall.

If winds that prate and fret  
Remark, rebuke, regret,  
Lament, or blame  
The brave plant's martial passion,  
It keeps its own free fashion  
All the same.

We that would fain seem wise  
Assume grave mouths and eyes  
Whose looks reprove  
Too much delight in battle :  
But your great heart our prattle  
Cannot move.

We say, small children should  
Be placid, mildly good  
And blandly meek :

Whereat the broad smile rushes  
Full on your lips, and flushes  
All your cheek.

If all the stars that are  
Laughed out, and every star  
Could here be heard,  
Such peals of golden laughter  
We should not hear, as after  
Such a word.

For all the storm saith, still,  
Stout stands the daffodil :  
For all we say,  
Howe'er he look demurely,  
Our martalist will surely  
Have his way.

We may not bind with bands  
Those large and liberal hands,  
Nor stay from fight,  
Nor hold them back from giving  
No lean mean laws of living  
Bind a knight.

And always here of old  
Such gentle hearts and bold  
Our land has bred :  
How durst her eye rest else on  
The glory shed from Nelson  
Quick and dead ?

Shame were it, if but one  
Such once were born her son,  
That one to have borne,

And brought him ne'er a brother :  
His praise should bring his mother  
Shame and scorn.

A child high-souled as he  
Whose manhood shook the sea  
Smiles haply here :  
His face, where love lies basking,  
With bright shut mouth seems asking,  
What is fear ?

The sunshine-coloured fists  
Beyond his dimpling wrists  
Were never closed  
For saving or for sparing—  
For only deeds of daring  
Predisposed.

Unclenched, the gracious hands  
Let slip their gifts like sands  
Made rich with ore  
That tongues of beggars ravish  
From small stout hands so lavish  
Of their store.

Sweet hardy kindly hands  
Like these were his that stands  
With heel on gorge  
Seen trampling down the dragon  
On sign or flask or flagon,  
Sweet Saint George.

Some tournament, perchance,  
Of hands that couch no lance,  
Might mark this spot

'Your lists, if here some pleasant  
Small Guenevere were present,  
Launcelot.

My brave bright flower, you need  
No foolish song, nor heed  
It more than spring  
The sighs of winter stricken  
Dead when your haunts requicken  
Here, my king.

Yet O, how hardly may  
The wheels of singing stay  
That whirl along  
Bright paths whence echo raises  
The phantom of your praises,  
Child, my song !

Beyond all other things  
That give my words fleet wings,  
Fleet wings and strong,  
You set their jesses ringing  
Till hardly can I, singing,  
Stint my song.

But all things better, friend,  
And worse must find an end :  
And, right or wrong,  
'Tis time, lest rhyme should baffle,  
I doubt, to put a snaffle  
On my song.

And never may your ear  
Aught harsher hear or fear,  
Nor wolfish night

Nor dog-toothed winter snarling  
Behind your steps, my darling  
My delight !

For all the gifts you give  
Me, dear, each day you live,  
    Of thanks above  
All thanks that could be spoken  
Take not my song in token,  
    Take my love.

## A CHILD'S FUTURE

WHAT will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be ?  
 Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea ?  
 Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is  
 stirred  
 Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise  
 are heard :  
 Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us  
 round,  
 Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound ;  
 Love may forsake us ; yet may not the spirit be bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardour of joy  
 Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a  
 toy :  
 Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives  
 Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives :  
 Death cannot slay her : she laughs upon death and  
 forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar  
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star :  
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be  
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their  
sea :  
Fear not at all ; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

SONNETS  
ON  
ENGLISH DRAMATIC POETS  
(1590-1650)



## I

## CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

CROWNED, girdled, garbed and shod with light and fire,  
Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star !  
Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,  
Most far off in the abyssm of time, thy lyre  
Hung highest above the dawn-ekindled quire  
Where all ye sang together, all that are,  
And all the starry songs behind thy car  
Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.

“ If all the pens that ever poets held  
Had fed the feeling of their masters’ thoughts,”  
And as with rush of hurtling chariots  
The flight of all their spirits were impelled  
Toward one great end, thy glory—nay, not then,  
Not yet might’st thou be praised enough of men.

## II

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one  
Spake, might the word be said that might speak  
Thee.

Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains,  
yea, the sea,

What power is in them all to praise the sun ?  
His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.

Man, woman, child, praise God for him ; but he  
Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.

He is ; and, being, beholds his work well done.  
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,  
Are his : without him, day were night on earth.

Time knows not his from time's own period.  
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,  
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.

All stars are angels ; but the sun is God.

## III

## BEN JONSON

BROAD-BASED, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,  
 With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,  
 Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,  
 And many a crag full-faced against the storm,  
 The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm  
 Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine  
 Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine  
 From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the grey grave heights,  
 High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling  
 lights  
 Hold converse : and the herd of meaner things  
 Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft  
 When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and  
 laughed  
 Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous  
 wings.

## IV

## BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER

AN hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,  
Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.  
The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,  
Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.  
Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast  
To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,  
Wax wider, till when all the sun had ceased  
As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.  
Across them and between, a quickening fire,  
Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.  
Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,  
Filled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth  
With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,  
Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.

## V

## PHILIP MASSINGER

CLOUDS here and there arisen an hour past noon  
Chequered our English heaven with lengthening  
bars  
And shadow and sound of wheel-winged thunder-  
cars  
Assembling strength to put forth tempest soon,  
When the clear still warm concord of thy tune  
Rose under skies unscared by reddening Mars  
Yet, like a sound of silver speech of stars,  
With full mild flame as of the mellowing moon.  
Grave and great-hearted Massinger, thy face  
High melancholy lights with loftier grace  
Than gilds the brows of revel : sad and wise,  
The spirit of thought that moved thy deeper song,  
Sorrow serene in soft calm scorn of wrong,  
Speaks patience yet from thy majestic eyes.

## VI

## JOHN FORD

Hew hard the marble from the mountain's heart  
Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom  
Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,  
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start  
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art  
Carved night, and chiselled shadow : be the tomb  
That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom  
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,  
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow  
His record of rebellion. Not the day  
Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,  
Touching this marble : darkness, none knows how,  
And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.  
So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

## VII

## JOHN WEBSTER

THUNDER : the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.  
Night: east, west, south, and northward, very night.  
Star upon struggling star strives into sight,  
Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.  
The very throne of night, her very crown,  
A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.  
Song from the highest of heaven's imperious height  
Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.  
Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime,  
Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time  
Shown in the spherical orbit of a glass  
Revolving. Earth cries out from all her graves.  
Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,  
Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

## VIII

## THOMAS DECKER

OUT of the depths of darkling life where sin  
Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know  
Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe ;  
Where hate and craft and lust make drearier din  
Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in ;  
What charm of joy-bells ringing, streams that flow,  
Winds that blow healing in each note they blow,  
Is this that the outer darkness hears begin ?

O sweetest heart of all thy time save one,  
Star seen for love's sake nearest to the sun,  
Hung lamplike o'er a dense and doleful city,  
Not Shakespeare's very spirit, howe'er more great,  
Than thine toward man was more compassionate,  
Nor gave Christ praise from lips more sweet with  
pity.

## IX

## THOMAS MIDDLETON

A WILD moon riding high from cloud to cloud,  
That sees and sees not, glimmering far beneath,  
Hell's children revel along the shuddering heath  
With dirge-like mirth and raiment like a shroud :  
A worse fair face than witchcraft's, passion-proud,  
With brows blood-flecked behind their bridal  
wreath  
And lips that bade the assassin's sword find sheath  
Deep in the heart whereto love's heart was vowed :  
A game of close contentious crafts and creeds  
Played till white England bring black Spain to  
shame :  
A son's bright sword and brighter soul, whose deeds  
High conscience lights for mother's love and fame :  
Pure gipsy flowers, and poisonous courtly weeds :  
Such tokens and such trophies crown thy name.

## X

## THOMAS HEYWOOD

TOM, if they loved thee best who called thee Tom,  
What else may all men call thee, seeing thus bright  
Even yet the laughing and the weeping light  
That still thy kind old eyes are kindled from ?  
Small care was thine to assail and overcome  
Time and his child Oblivion : yet of right  
Thy name has part with names of lordlier might  
For English love and homely sense of home,  
Whose fragrance keeps thy small sweet bayleaf  
young  
And gives it place aloft among thy peers  
Whence many a wreath once higher strong Time  
has hurled :  
And this thy praise is sweet on Shakespeare's  
tongue—  
“ O good old man, how well in thee appears  
The constant service of the antique world ! ”

## XI

## GEORGE CHAPMAN

HIGH priest of Homer, not elect in vain,  
 Deep trumpets blow before thee, shawms behind  
 Mix music with the rolling wheels that wind  
 Slow through the labouring triumph of thy train :  
 Fierce history, molten in thy forging brain,  
 Takes form and fire and fashion from thy mind,  
 Tormented and transmuted out of kind :  
 But howsoe'er thou shift thy strenuous strain,  
 Like Tailor<sup>1</sup> smooth, like Fisher<sup>2</sup> swollen, and now  
 Grim Yarrington<sup>3</sup> scarce bloodier marked than  
 thou,  
 Then bluff as Mayne's<sup>4</sup> or broad-mouthed Barry's<sup>5</sup>  
 glee ;  
 Proud still with hoar predominance of brow  
 And beard like foam swept off the broad blown sea,  
 Where'er thou go, men's reverence goes with thee.

<sup>1</sup> Author of *The Hog hath lost his Pearl*.

<sup>2</sup> Author of *Fuimus Troes, or the True Trojans*.

<sup>3</sup> Author of *Two Tragedies in One*.

<sup>4</sup> Author of *The City Match*.

<sup>5</sup> Author of *Ram-Alley, or Merry Tricks*.

## XII

## JOHN MARSTON

THE bitterness of death and bitterer scorn  
 Breathes from the broad-leaved aloe-plant whence  
 thou  
 Wast fain to gather for thy bended brow  
 A chaplet by no gentler forehead worn.  
 Grief deep as hell, wrath hardly to be borne,  
 Ploughed up thy soul till round the furrowing  
 plough  
 The strange black soil foamed, as a black beaked  
 prow  
 Bids night-black waves foam where its track has  
 torn.  
 Too faint the phrase for thee that only saith  
 Scorn bitterer than the bitterness of death  
 Pervades the sullen splendour of thy soul,  
 Where hate and pain make war on force and fraud  
 And all the strengths of tyrants ; whence unflawed  
 It keeps this noble heart of hatred whole.

## XIII

## JOHN DAY

DAY was a full-blown flower in heaven, alive  
With murmuring joy of bees and birds aswarm,  
When in the skies of song yet flushed and warm  
With music where all passion seems to strive  
For utterance, all things bright and fierce to drive  
Struggling along the splendour of the storm,  
Day for an hour put off his fiery form,  
And golden murmurs from a golden hive  
Across the strong bright summer wind were heard,  
And laughter soft as smiles from girls at play  
And loud from lips of boys brow-bound with May  
Our mightiest age let fall its gentlest word,  
When Song, in semblance of a sweet small bird,  
Lit fluttering on the light swift hand of Day.

## XIV

## JAMES SHIRLEY

THE dusk of day's decline was hard ~~in~~ dark  
When evening trembled round thy glowworm lamp  
That shone across her shades and dewy damp  
A small clear beacon whose benignant spark  
Was gracious yet for loiterers' eyes to mark,  
Though changed the watchword of our English  
camp  
Since the outposts rang round Marlowe's lion  
ramp,  
When thy steed's pace went ambling round Hyde  
Park.

And in the thickening twilight under thee  
Walks Davenant, pensive in the paths where he,  
The blithest throat that ever carolled love  
In music made of morning's merriest heart,  
Glad Suckling, stumbled from his seat above  
And reeled on slippery roads of alien art.

## XV

## THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN

SONS born of many a loyal Muse to Ben,  
All true-begotten, warm with wine or ale,  
Bright from the broad light of its presence, hail !  
Prince Randolph, nighest his throne of all his men,  
Being highest in spirit and heart who hailed him  
then

King, nor might other spread so blithe a sail :  
Cartwright, a soul pent in with narrower pale,  
Praised of thy sire for manful might of pen :  
Marmion, whose verse keeps alway keen and fine  
The perfume of their Apollonian wine  
Who shared with that stout sire of all and thee  
The exuberant chalice of his echoing shrine :  
Is not your praise writ broad in gold which he  
Inscribed, that all who praise his name should see ?

## XVI

## ANONYMOUS PLAYS :

## “ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM”

MOTHER whose womb brought forth our man of men,  
Mother of Shakespeare, whom all time acclaims  
Queen therefore, sovereign queen of English dames,  
Throned higher than sat thy sonless empress then,  
Was it thy son's young passion-guided pen  
Which drew, reflected from encircling flames,  
A figure marked by the earlier of thy names  
Wife, and from all her wedded kinswomen  
Marked by the sign of murderer? Pale and great,  
Great in her grief and sin, but in her death  
And anguish of her penitential breath  
Greater than all her sin or sin-born fate,  
She stands, the holocaust of dark desire,  
Clothed round with song for ever as with fire.

## XVII

### ANONYMOUS PLAYS

Ye too, dim watchfires of some darkling hour,  
 Whose fame forlorn time saves not nor proclaims  
 For ever, but forgetfulness defames  
 And darkness and the shadow of death devour,  
 Lift up ye too your light, put forth your power,  
 Let the far twilight feel your soft small flames  
 And smile, albeit night name not even their names,  
 Ghost by ghost passing, flower blown down on flower:  
 That sweet-tongued shadow, like a star's that passed  
 Singing, and light was from its darkness cast  
 To paint the face of Painting fair with praise :<sup>1</sup>  
 And that wherein forefigured smiles the pure  
 Fraternal face of Wordsworth's Elidure  
 Between two child-faced masks of merrier days.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Doctor Dodypol.*

<sup>2</sup> *Nobody and Somebody.*

XVIII  
ANONYMOUS PLAYS

MORE yet and more, and yet we mark not all :  
 The Warning fain to bid fair women heed  
 Its hard brief note of deadly doom and deed ;<sup>1</sup>  
 The verse that strewed too thick with flowers the hall  
 Whence Nero watched his fiery festival ;<sup>2</sup>  
 That iron page wherein men's eyes who read  
 See, bruised and marred between two babes that  
 bleed,  
 A mad red-handed husband's martyr fall ;<sup>3</sup>  
 The scene which crossed and streaked with mirth the  
 strife  
 Of Henry with his sons and witchlike wife ;<sup>4</sup>  
 And that sweet pageant of the kindly fiend,  
 Who, seeing three friends in spirit and heart made  
 one,  
 Crowned with good hap the true-love wiles he screened  
 In the pleached lanes of pleasant Edmonton.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Warning for Fair Women.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Tragedy of Nero.*

<sup>3</sup> *A Yorkshire Tragedy.*

<sup>4</sup> *Look about you.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Merry Devil of Edmonton.*

## XIX

## THE MANY

## I

GREENE, garlanded with February's few flowers,  
 Ere March came in with Marlowe's rapturous rage:  
 Peele, from whose hand the sweet white locks of age  
 Took the mild chaplet woven of honoured hours :  
 Nash, laughing hard : Lodge, flushed from lyric  
 bowers :  
 And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage  
 Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page  
 Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring  
 showers :  
 Kid, whose grim sport still gambolled over graves :  
 And Chettle, in whose fresh funereal verse  
 Weeps Marian yet on Robin's wildwood hearse :  
 Cooke, whose light boat of song one soft breath saves,  
 Sighed from a maiden's amorous mouth averse :  
 Live likewise ye : Time takes not you for slaves.

## XX

## THE MANY

## II

HAUGHTON, whose mirth gave woman all her will :  
 Field, bright and loud with laughing flower and  
 bird  
 And keen alternate notes of laud and gird :  
 Barnes, darkening once with Borgia's deeds the quill  
 Which tuned the passion of Parthenophil :  
 Blithe burly Porter, broad and bold of word :  
 Wilkins, a voice with strenuous pity stirred :  
 Turk Mason : Brewer, whose tongue drops honey  
 still :  
 Rough Rowley, handling song with Esau's hand :  
 Light Nabbes : lean Sharpham, rank and raw by  
 turns,  
 But fragrant with a forethought once of Burns :  
 Soft Davenport, sad-robed, but blithe and bland :  
 Brome, gipsy-led across the woodland ferns :  
 Praise be with all, and place among our band.

## XXI

## EPILOGUE

OUR mother, which wast twice, as history saith,  
    Found first among the nations : once, when she  
    Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee  
Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare : once,  
    when death  
Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at  
    Milton's breath :  
    More than thy place, then first among the free  
    More than that sovereign lordship of the sea  
Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth,  
More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake  
Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake,  
    More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right  
    hand,  
This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong  
That thou wast head of all these streams of song,  
    And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land.



# A DARK MONTH

**“La maison sans enfants!”—VICTOR HUGO.**

## I

A MONTH without sight of the sun  
 Rising or reigning or setting  
 Through days without use of the day,  
 Who calls it the month of May?  
 The sense of the name is undone  
 And the sound of it fit for forgetting.

We shall not feel if the sun rise,  
 We shall not care when it sets :  
 If a nightingale make night's air  
 As noontide, why should we care?  
 Till a light of delight that is done rise,  
 Extinguishing grey regrets ;

Till a child's face lighten again  
 On the twilight of older faces ;  
 Till a child's voice fall as the dew  
 On furrows with heat parched through  
 And all but hopeless of grain,  
 Refreshing the desolate places—

Fall clear on the ears of us hearkening  
 And hungering for food of the sound  
 And thirsting for joy of his voice :  
 Till the hearts in us hear and rejoice,  
 And the thoughts of them doubting and  
 darkening  
 Rejoice with a glad thing found.

When the heart of our gladness is gone,  
What comfort is left with us after ?  
When the light of our eyes is away,  
What glory remains upon May,  
What blessing of song is thereon  
If we drink not the light of his laughter ?

No small sweet face with the daytime  
To welcome, warmer than noon !  
No sweet small voice as a bird's  
To bring us the day's first words !  
Mid May for us here is not Maytime :  
No summer begins with June.

A whole dead month in the dark,  
A dawn in the mists that o'ercome her  
Stifled and smothered and sad—  
Swift speed to it, barren and bad !  
And return to us, voice of the lark,  
And remain with us, sunlight of summer.

## II

ALAS, what right has the dawn to glimmer,  
What right has the wind to do aught but  
moan?

All the day should be dimmer  
Because we are left alone.

Yestermorn like a sunbeam present  
Hither and thither a light step smiled,  
And made each place for us pleasant  
With the sense or the sight of a child.

But the leaves persist as before, and after  
Our parting the dull day still bears flowers;  
And songs less bright than his laughter  
Deride us from birds in the bowers.

Birds, and blossoms, and sunlight only,  
As though such folly sufficed for spring!  
As though the house were not lonely  
For want of the child its king!

## III

ASLEEP and afar to-night my darling  
Lies, and heeds not the night,  
If winds be stirring or storms be snarling—  
For his sleep is its own sweet light.

I sit where he sat beside me quaffing  
The wine of story and song  
Poured forth of immortal cups, and laughing  
When mirth in the draught grew strong.

I broke the gold of the words, to melt it  
For hands but seven years old,  
And they caught the tale as a bird, and felt it  
More bright than visible gold.

And he drank down deep, with his eyes broad  
beaming,  
Here in this room where I am,  
The golden vintage of Shakespeare, gleaming  
In the silver vessels of Lamb.

Here by my hearth where he was I listen  
For the shade of the sound of a word,  
Athirst for the birdlike eyes to glisten,  
For the tongue to chirp like a bird.

At the blast of battle, how broad they brightened,  
Like fire in the spheres of stars,  
And clung to the pictured page, and lightened  
As keen as the heart of Mars !

At the touch of laughter, how swift it twittered  
The shrillest music on earth ;  
How the lithe limbs laughed and the whole child  
glittered  
With radiant riot of mirth !

Our Shakespeare now, as a man dumb-stricken,  
Stands silent there on the shelf :  
And my thoughts, that had song in the heart of  
them, sicken,  
And relish not Shakespeare's self.

And my mood grows moodier than Hamlet's even,  
And man delights not me,  
But only the face that morn and even  
My heart leapt only to see.

That my heart made merry within me seeing,  
. And sang as his laugh kept time :  
But song finds now no pleasure in being,  
And love no reason in rhyme.

## IV

MILD May-blossom and proud sweet bay-flower,  
What, for shame, would you have with us here?  
It is not the month of the May-flower  
This, but the fall of the year.

Flowers open only their lips in derision,  
Leaves are as fingers that point in scorn ·  
The shows we see are a vision ;  
Spring is not verily born.

Yet boughs turn supple and buds grow sappy,  
As though the sun were indeed the sun :  
And all our woods are happy  
With all their birds save one.

But spring is over; but summer is over,  
But autumn is over, and winter stands  
With his feet sunk deep in the clover  
And cowslips cold in his hands.

His hoar grim head has a hawthorn bonnet,  
His gnarled gaunt hand has a gay green staff  
With new-blown rose-blossom on it :  
But his laugh is a dead man's laugh.

The laugh of spring that the heart seeks after,  
The hand that the whole world yearns to kiss,  
It rings not here in his laughter,  
The sign of it is not this.

There is not strength in it left to splinter  
Tall oaks, nor frost in his breath to sting :  
Yet it is but a breath as of winter,  
And it is not the hand of spring.

## V

THIRTY-ONE pale maidens, clad  
    All in mourning dresses,  
Pass, with lips and eyes more sad  
That it seems they should be glad,  
Heads discrowned of crowns they had,  
    Grey for golden tresses.

Grey their girdles too for green,  
    And their veils dishevelled :  
None would say, to see their mien,  
That the least of these had been  
Born no baser than a queen,  
    Reared where flower-fays revelled.

Dreams that strive to seem awake,  
    Ghosts that walk by daytime,  
Weary winds the way they take,  
Since, for one child's absent sake,  
May knows well, whate'er things make  
    Sport, it is not Maytime.

## VI

A HAND at the door taps light  
As the hand of my heart's delight :

It is but a full-grown hand,  
Yet the stroke of it seems to start  
Hope like a bird in my heart,  
Too feeble to soar or to stand.

To start light hope from her cover  
Is to raise but a kite for a plover  
If her wings be not fledged to soar.  
Desire, but in dreams, cannot ope  
The door that was shut upon hope  
When love went out at the door.

Well were it if vision could keep  
The lids of desire as in sleep  
Fast locked, and over his eyes  
A dream with the dark soft key  
In her hand might hover, and be  
Their keeper till morning rise ;

The morning that brings after many  
Days fled with no light upon any  
The small face back which is gone ;  
When the loved little hands once more  
Shall struggle and strain at the door  
They beat their summons upon.

## VII

If a soul for but seven days were cast out of heaven  
and its mirth,  
They would seem to her fears like as seventy years  
upon earth.

Even and morrow should seem to her sorrow as long  
As the passage of numberless ages in slumberless  
song.

Dawn, roused by the lark, would be surely as dark in  
her sight  
As her measureless measure of shadowless pleasure  
was bright.

Noon, gilt but with glory of gold, would be hoary  
and grey  
In her eyes that had gazed on the depths, unamazed  
with the day.

Night hardly would seem to make darker her dream  
never done,  
When it could but withhold what a man may behold  
of the sun.

For dreams would perplex, were the days that should  
vex her but seven,  
The sight of her vision, made dark with division from  
heaven.

Till the light on my lonely way lighten that only now  
gleams,  
I too am divided from heaven and derided of dreams.

## VIII

A TWILIGHT fire-fly may suggest  
How flames the fire that feeds the sun :  
“A crooked figure may attest  
In little space a million.”

But this faint-figured verse, that dresses  
With flowers the bones of one bare month,  
Of all it would say scarce expresses  
In crooked ways a millionth.

A fire-fly tenders to the father  
Of fires a tribute something worth :  
My verse, a shard-borne beetle rather,  
Drones over scarce-illumined earth.

Some inches round me though it brighten  
With light of music-making thought,  
The dark indeed it may not lighten,  
The silence moves not, hearing nought.

Only my heart is eased with hearing,  
Only mine eyes are soothed with seeing,  
A face brought nigh, a footfall nearing,  
Till hopes take form and dreams have being.

## IX

As a poor man hungering stands with insatiate eyes  
and hands

    Void of bread  
Right in sight of men that feast while his famine with  
    no least  
    Crumb is fed,

Here across the garden-wall can I hear strange chil-  
dren call,

    Watch them play,  
From the windowed seat above, whence the goodlier  
    child I love  
    Is away.

Here the sights we saw together moved his fancy like  
a feather

    To and fro,  
Now to wonder, and thereafter to the sunny storm of  
    laughter  
    Loud and low—

Sights engraven on storied pages where man's tale of  
seven swift ages

    All was told—  
Seen of eyes yet bright from heaven—for the lips that  
    laughed were seven  
    Sweet years old:

## X

WHY should May remember  
March, if March forget  
The days that began with December  
The nights that a frost could fret ?

All their griefs are done with  
Now the bright months bless  
Fit souls to rejoice in the sun with,  
Fit heads for the wind's caress ;

Souls of children quickening  
With the whole world's mirth,  
Heads closer than field-flowers thickening  
That crowd and illuminate earth,

Now that May's call musters  
Files of baby bands  
To marshal in joyfuller clusters  
Than the flowers that encumber their hands.

Yet morose November  
Found them no less gay,  
With nought to forget or remember  
Less bright than a branch of may.

All the seasons moving  
Move their minds alike  
Applauding, acclaiming, approving  
All hours of the year that strike.

So my heart may fret not,  
Wondering if my friend  
Remember me not or forget not  
Or ever the month find end.

Not that love sows lighter  
Seed in children sown,  
But that life being lit in them brighter  
Moves fleeter than even our own.

May nor yet September  
Binds their hearts, that yet  
Remember, forget, and remember,  
Forget, and recall, and forget.

## XI

As light on a lake's face moving  
Between a cloud and a cloud  
Till night reclaim it, reproving  
The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices  
When soft it swims into sight  
Applauded of all the voices  
And stars of the windy night,

So brief and unsure, but sweeter  
Than ever a moondawn smiled,  
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,  
The song in the soul of a child ;

The song that the sweet soul singing  
Half listens, and hardly hears,  
Though sweeter than joy-bells ringing  
And brighter than joy's own tears ;

The song that remembrance of pleasure  
Begins, and forgetfulness ends  
With a soft swift change in the measure  
That rings in remembrance of friends

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,  
So haply may gleam at whiles  
A dream through the dear deep lashes  
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

And the least of us all that love him  
May take for a moment part  
With angels around and above him,  
And I find place in his heart.

## XII

CHILD, were you kinless and lonely—  
Dear, were you kin to me—  
My love were compassionate only  
Or such as it needs would be.

But eyes of father and mother  
Like sunlight shed on you shine :  
What need you have heed of another  
Such new strange love as is mine ?

It is not meet if unruly  
Hands take of the children's bread  
And cast it to dogs ; but truly  
The dogs after all would be fed.

On crumbs from the children's table  
That crumble, dropped from above,  
My heart feeds, fed with unstable  
Loose waifs of a child's light love.

Though love in your heart were brittle  
As glass that breaks with a touch,  
You haply would lend him a little  
Who surely would give you much.

## XIII

HERE is a rough  
Rude sketch of my friend,  
Faint-coloured enough  
And unworthily penned.

Fearlessly fair  
And triumphant he stands,  
And holds unaware  
Friends' hearts in his hands ;

Stalwart and straight  
As an oak that should bring  
Forth gallant and great  
Fresh roses in spring.

On the paths of his pleasure  
All graces that wait  
What metre shall measure  
What rhyme shall relate

Each action, each motion,  
Each feature, each limb,  
Demands a devotion  
In honour of him :

Head that the hand  
 Of a god might have blest,  
 Laid lustrous and bland  
 On the curve of its crest :

Mouth sweeter than cherries,  
 Keen eyes as of Mars,  
 Browner than berries  
 And brighter than stars.

Nor colour nor wordy  
 Weak song can declare  
 The stature how sturdy,  
 How stalwart his air.

As a king in his bright  
 Presence-chamber may be,  
 So seems he in height—  
 Twice higher than your knee.

As a warrior sedate  
 With reserve of his power,  
 So seems he in state—  
 As tall as a flower :

As a rose overowering  
 The ranks of the rest  
 That beneath it lie cowering,  
 Less bright than their best.

And his hands are as sunny  
 As ruddy ripe corn  
 Or the browner-hued honey  
 From heather-bells borne.

When summer sits proudest,  
Fulfilled with its mirth,  
And rapture is loudest  
In air and on earth,

The suns of all hours  
That have ripened the roots  
Bring forth not such flowers  
And beget not such fruits.

And well though I know it,  
As fain would I write,  
Child, never a poet  
Could praise you aright.

I bless you ? the blessing  
Were less than a jest  
Too poor for expressing ;  
I come to be blest,

With humble and dutiful  
Heart, from above :  
Bless me, O my beautiful  
Innocent love !

This rhyme in your praise  
With a smile was begun ;  
But the goal of his ways  
Is uncovered to none,

Nor previous till after  
The limit impend ;  
It is not in laughter  
These rhymes of you end.

## XIV

SPRING, and fall, and summer, and winter,  
Which may Earth love least of them all,  
Whose arms embrace as their signs imprint her,  
Summer, or winter, or spring, or fall ?

The clear-eyed spring with the wood-birds mating,  
The rose-red summer with eyes aglow,  
The yellow fall with serene eyes waiting,  
The wild-eyed winter with hair all snow ?

Spring's eyes are soft, but if frosts benumb her  
As winter's own will her shrewd breath sting :  
Storms may rend the raiment of summer,  
And fall grow bitter as harsh-lipped spring.

One sign for summer and winter guides me,  
One for spring, and the like for fall :  
Whichever from sight of my friend divides me,  
That is the worst ill season of all.

## XV

WORSE than winter is spring  
If I come not to sight of my king :  
But then what a spring will it be  
When my king takes homage of me !

I send his grace from afar  
Homage, as though to a star ;  
As a shepherd whose flock takes flight  
May worship a star by night.

As a flock that a wolf is upon  
My songs take flight and are gone :  
No heart is in any to sing  
Aught but the praise of my king.

Fain would I once and again  
Sing deeds and passions of men :  
But ever a child's head gleams  
Between my work and my dreams.

Between my hand and my eyes  
The lines of a small face rise,  
And the lines I trace and retrace  
Are none but those of the face.

## XVI

TILL the tale of all this flock of days alike  
    All be done,  
Weary days of waiting till the month's hand strike  
    Thirty-one,  
Till the clock's hand of the month break off, and end  
    With the clock,  
Till the last and whitest sheep at last be penned  
    Of the flock,  
I their shepherd keep the count of night and day  
    With my song,  
Though my song be, like this month which once was  
    May,  
All too long.

## XVII

THE incarnate sun, a tall strong youth,  
On old Greek eyes in sculpture smiled :  
But trulier had it given the truth  
To shape him like a child.

No face full-grown of all our dearest  
So lightens all our darkness, none  
Most loved of all our hearts hold nearest  
To far outshines the sun.

As when with sly shy smiles that feign  
Doubt if the hour be clear, the time  
Fit to break off my work again  
Or sport of prose or rhyme,

My friend peers in on me with merry  
Wise face, and though the sky stay dim  
The very light of day, the very  
Sun's self comes in with him.

## XVIII

**Out of sight,  
Out of mind !  
Could the light  
Prove unkind ?**

**Can the sun  
Quite forget  
What was done  
Ere he set ?**

**Does the moon  
When she wanes  
Leave no tune  
That remains**

**In the void  
Shell of night  
Overclothed  
With her light ?**

**Must the shore  
At low tide  
Feel no more  
Hope or pride,**

**No intense  
Joy to be,  
In the sense  
Of the sea—**

In the pulses  
Of her shocks  
It repulses,  
When its rocks

Thrill and ring  
As with glee ?  
Has my king  
Cast off me,

Whom no bird  
Flying south  
Brings one word  
From his mouth ?

Not the ghost  
Of a word  
Riding post  
Have I heard,

Since the day  
When my king  
Took away  
With him spring,

And the cup  
Of each flower  
Shrivelled up  
That same hour,

With no light  
Left behind.  
Out of sight,  
Out of mind !

## XIX

BECAUSE I adore you  
And fall  
On the knees of my spirit before you—  
After all,

You need not insult,  
My king,  
With neglect, though your spirit exult  
In the spring,

Even me, though not worth,  
God knows,  
One word of you sent me in mirth,  
Or one rose

Out of all in your garden  
That grow  
Where the frost and the wind never harden  
Flakes of snow,

Nor ever is rain  
At all,  
But the roses rejoice to remain  
Fair and tall—

The roses of love,  
More sweet  
Than blossoms that rain from above  
Round our feet,

When under high bowers  
We pass,  
Where the west wind freckles with flowers  
All the grass.

But a child's thoughts bear  
More bright  
Sweet visions by day, and more fair  
Dreams by night,

Than summer's whole treasure  
Can be :  
What am I that his thought should take pleasure,  
Then, in me ?

I am only my love's  
True lover,  
With a nestful of songs, like doves  
Under cover,

That I bring in my cap  
Fresh caught,  
To be laid on my small king's lap—  
Worth just nought.

Yet it haply may hap  
That he,  
When the mirth in his veins is as sap  
In a tree.

Will remember me too  
Some day  
Ere the transit be thoroughly through  
Of this May—

Or perchance, if such grace  
May be,  
Some night when I dream of his face,  
Dream of me.

Or if this be too high  
A hope  
For me to prefigure in my  
Horoscope,

He may dream of the place  
Where we  
Basked once in the light of his face,  
Who now see

Nought brighter, not one  
Thing bright,  
Than the stars and the moon and the sun.  
Day nor night.

## XX

Day by darkling day,  
Overpassing, bears away  
Somewhat of the burden of this weary May.

Night by numbered night,  
Waning, brings more near in sight  
Hope that grows to vision of my heart's delight.

Nearer seems to burn  
In the dawn's rekindling urn  
Flame of fragrant incense, hailing his return.

Louder seems each bird  
In the brightening branches heard  
Still to speak some ever more delightful word.

All the mists that swim  
Round the dawns that grow less dim  
Still wax brighter and more bright with hope of him.

All the suns that rise  
Bring that day more near our eyes  
When the sight of him shall clear our clouded skies.

All the winds that roam  
Fruitful fields or fruitless foam  
Blow the bright hour near that brings his bright face  
home.

## XXI

I HEAR of two far hence  
In a garden met,  
And the fragrance blown from thence  
Fades not yet.

The one is seven years old,  
And my friend is he :  
But the years of the other have told  
Eighty-three.

To hear these twain converse  
Or to see them greet  
Were sweeter than softest verse  
May be sweet.

The hoar old gardener there  
With an eye more mild  
Perchance than his mild white hair  
Meets the child.

I had rather hear the words  
That the twain exchange  
Than the songs of all the birds  
There that range.

Call, chirp, and twitter there  
Through the garden-beds  
Where the sun alike sees fair  
Those two heads,

And which may holier be  
Held in heaven of those  
Or more worth heart's thanks to see  
No man knows.

## XXII

Of such is the kingdom of heaven,  
    No glory that ever was shea  
From the crowning star of the seven  
    That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken  
    Of human or godlike tongue,  
Gave ever such godlike token  
    Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given  
    To faithful or faithless eyes  
Showed ever beyond clouds riven  
    So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven  
    And blood have defiled each creed :  
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,  
    It must be heaven indeed.

## XXIII

THE wind on the downs is bright  
As though from the sea :  
And morning and night  
Take comfort again with me.

He is nearer to-day,  
Each night to each morning saith,  
Whose return shall revive dead May  
With the balm of his breath.

The sunset says to the moon,  
He is nearer to-night  
Whose coming in June  
Is looked for more than the light.

Bird answers to bird,  
Hour passes the sign on to hour,  
And for joy of the bright news heard  
Flower murmurs to flower.

The ways that were glad of his feet  
In the woods that he knew  
Grow softer to meet  
The sense of his footfall anew.

He is near now as day,  
Says hope to the new-born light :  
He is near now as June is to May,  
Says love to the night.

## XXIV

Good things I keep to console me  
For lack of the best of all,  
A child to command and control me,  
Bid come and remain at his call.

Sun, wind, and woodland and highland.  
Give all that ever they gave :  
But my world is a cultureless island,  
My spirit a masterless slave.

And friends are about me, and better  
At summons of no man stand :  
But I pine for the touch of a fetter,  
The curb of a strong king's hand.

Each hour of the day in her season  
Is mine to be served as I will :  
And for no more exquisite reason  
Are all served idly and ill.

By slavery my sense is corrupted,  
My soul not fit to be free :  
I would fain be controlled, interrupted,  
Compelled as a thrall may be.

For fault of spur and of bridle  
I tire of my stall to death :  
My sail flaps joyless and idle  
For want of a small child's breath.

## XXV

Whiter and whiter  
The dark lines grow,  
And broader opens and brighter  
The sense of the text below.

Nightfall and morrow  
Bring nigher the boy  
Whom wanting we want not sorrow,  
Whom having we want no joy.

Clearer and clearer  
The sweet sense grows  
Of the word which hath summer for hearer,  
The word on the lips of the rose.

Duskily dwindle  
Each deathlike day,  
Till June rearising rekindles  
The depth of the darkness of May.

## XXVI

“ In his bright radiance and collateral light  
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.”

STARS in heaven are many,  
Suns in heaven but one :  
Nor for man may any  
Star supplant the sun.

Many a child as joyous  
As our far-off king  
Meets as though to annoy us  
In the paths of spring.

Sure as spring gives warning,  
All things dance in tune :  
Sun on Easter morning,  
Cloud and windy moon,

Stars between the tossing  
Boughs of tuneful trees,  
Sails of ships recrossing  
Leagues of dancing seas ;

Best, in all this playtime,  
Best of all in tune,  
Girls more glad than Maytime,  
Boys more bright than June ;

Mixed with all those dances,  
Far through field and street  
Sing their silent glances,  
Ring their radiant feet.

Flowers wherewith May crowned us  
Fall ere June be crowned :  
Children blossom round us  
All the whole year round.

Is the garland worthless  
For one rose the less,  
And the feast made mirthless ?  
Love, at least, says yes.

Strange it were, with many  
Stars enkindling air,  
Should but one find any  
Welcome : strange it were,

Had one star alone won  
Praise for light from far :  
Nay, love needs his own one  
Bright particular star.

Hope and recollection  
Only lead him right  
In its bright reflection  
And collateral light.

Find as yet we may not  
Comfort in its sphere :  
Yet these days will weigh not  
When it warms us here :

## A DARK MONTH

When full-orbed it rises,  
Now divined afar :  
None in all the skies is  
Half so good a star ;

None that seers importune  
Till a sign be won :  
Star of our good fortune,  
Rise and reign, our sun !

## XXVII

I PASS by the small room now forlorn  
Where once each night as I passed I knew  
A child's bright sleep from even to morn  
Made sweet the whole night through.

As a soundless shell, as a songless nest,  
Seems now the room that was radiant then  
And fragrant with his happier rest  
Than that of slumbering men.

The day therein is less than the day,  
The night is indeed night now therein :  
Heavier the dark seems there to weigh,  
And slower the dawns begin.

As a nest fulfilled with birds, as a shell  
Fulfilled with breath of a god's own hymn,  
Again shall be this bare blank cell,  
Made sweet again with him.

## XXVIII

SPRING darkens before us,  
A flame going down,  
With chant from the chorus  
Of days without crown —  
Cloud, rain, and sonorous  
Soft wind on the down.

She is wearier not of us  
Than we of the dream  
That spring was to love us  
And joy was to gleam  
Through the shadows above us  
That shift as they stream.

Half dark and half hoary,  
Float far on the loud  
Mild wind, as a glory  
Half pale and half proud  
From the twilight of story,  
Her tresses of cloud ;

Like phantoms that glimmer  
Of glories of old  
With ever yet dimmer  
Pale circlets of gold  
As darkness grows grimmer  
And memory more cold.

Like hope growing clearer  
With wane of the moon,  
Shines toward us the nearer  
Gold frontlet of June,  
And a face with it dearer  
Than midsummer moon.

## XXIX

You send me your love in a letter,  
I send you my love in a song :  
Ah child, your gift is the better,  
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,  
No praise, were it wide as earth,  
Is worth so much as a little  
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us  
As they might angels above :  
Come back to us, child, if you love us,  
And bring us your love.

## XXX

No time for books or for letters :  
What time should there be ?  
No room for tasks and their fitters :  
Full room to be free.

The wind and the sun and the Maytime  
Had never a guest  
More worthy the most that his playtime  
Could give of its best.

If rain should come on, peradventure,  
(But sunshine forbid !)  
Vain hope in us haply might venture  
To dream as it did.

But never may come, of all comers  
Least welcome, the rain,  
To mix with his servant the summer's  
Rose-garlanded train !

He would write, but his hours are as busy  
As bees in the sun,  
And the jubilant whirl of their dizzy  
Dance never is done.

The message is more than a letter,  
Let love understand,  
And the thought of his joys even better  
Than sight of his hand.

## XXXI

WIND, high-souled, full-hearted  
South-west wind of the spring !  
Ere April and earth had parted,  
Skies, bright with thy forward wing,  
Grew dark in an hour with the shadow behind it, that  
bade not a bird dare sing.

Wind whose feet are sunny,  
Wind whose wings are cloud,  
With lips more sweet than honey  
Still, speak they low or loud,  
Rejoice now again in the strength of thine heart: let  
the depth of thy soul wax proud.

We hear thee singing or sighing,  
Just not given to sight,  
All but visibly flying  
Between the clouds and the light,  
And the light in our hearts is enkindled, the shadow  
therein of the clouds put to flight.

From the gift of thine hands we gather  
The core of the flowers therein,  
Keen glad heart of heather,  
Hot sweet heart of whin,  
Twin breaths in thy godlike breath close blended of  
wild spring's wildest of kin.

All but visibly beating  
 We feel thy wings in the far  
 Clear waste, and the plumes of them fleeting,  
 Soft as swan's plumes are,  
 And strong as a wild swan's pinions, and swift as the  
 flash of the flight of a star.

As the flight of a planet enkindled  
 Seems thy far soft flight  
 Now May's reign has dwindled  
 And the crescent of June takes light  
 And the presence of summer is here, and the hope of  
 a welcomer presence in sight.

Wind, sweet-souled, great-hearted  
 Southwest wind on the wold !  
 From us is a glory departed  
 That now shall return as of old,  
 Borne back on thy wings as an eagle's expanding, and  
 crowned with the sundawn's gold.

There is not a flower but rejoices,  
 There is not a leaf but has heard :  
 All the fields find voices,  
 All the woods are stirred :  
 There is not a nest but is brighter because of the  
 coming of one bright bird.

Out of dawn and morning,  
 Noon and afternoon,  
 The sun to the world gives warning  
 Of news that brightens the moon ;  
 And the stars all night exult with us, hearing of joy  
 that shall come with June.

## SUNRISE

IF the wind and the sunlight of April and August had  
mingled the past and hereafter  
In a single adorable season whose life were a rapture  
of love and of laughter,  
And the blitheest of singers were back with a song ; if  
again from his tomb as from prison,  
If again from the night or the twilight of ages Aristophanes had arisen,  
With the gold-feathered wings of a bird that were  
also a god upon earth at his shoulders,  
And the gold-flowing laugh of the manhood of old at  
his lips, for a joy to beholders,  
He alone unrebuked of presumption were able to set  
to some adequate measure  
The delight of our eyes in the dawn that restores  
them the sun of their sense and the pleasure.  
For the days of the darkness of spirit are over for all  
of us here, and the season  
When desire was a longing, and absence a thorn, and  
rejoicing a word without reason.  
For the roof overhead of the pines is astir with delight  
as of jubilant voices,  
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather  
alive as a heart that rejoices.

For the house that was childless awhile, and the light  
of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,  
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with  
the light of his face is rekindled.  
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the  
sweep of the down that the sky's belt closes,  
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them  
whose feet were but fragrant with roses,  
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted  
in June and by June were defrauded,  
And the summer that brought us not back the desire  
of our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.  
For July came joyless among us, and August went  
out from us arid and sterile,  
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no  
more than a flower that the seasons imperil,  
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought  
which regret had not heart to remember,  
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and  
summer began in September.  
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's  
voice hither and thither :  
See, May in the garden again with a child's face  
cheering the woods ere they wither.  
June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on the  
sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,  
And August glows in a smile more sweet than the  
cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.  
In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun,  
and the noon with delight in him flushes,  
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as  
soft as the sleep that it hushes.  
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a gift  
of the sundawn's giving,

And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all sounds  
else in the world of the living,  
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all in  
the world of our visions beholden,  
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that  
the light of a world without grief makes golden.  
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a  
likeness of heaven and its glory,  
What was it of old, or what is it and will be for ever,  
in song or in story,  
Or in shape or in colour of carven or painted resem-  
blance, adored of all ages,  
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures  
of old or the pages ?  
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven if  
they come not again shall be never :  
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of  
heaven and its promise for ever.

SPECIMENS OF MODERN POETS

THE HEPTALOGIA

OR

THE SEVEN AGAINST SENSE

A CAP WITH SEVEN BELLS



## THE HIGHER PANTHEISM IN A NUTSHELL

ONE, who is not, we see : but one, whom we see not,  
is :

Surely this is not that : but that is assuredly this.

What, and wherefore, and whence ? for under is over  
and under :

If thunder could be without lightning, lightning could  
be without thunder.

Doubt is faith in the main : but faith, on the whole,  
is doubt :

We cannot believe by proof: but could we believe  
without ?

Why, and whither, and how ? for barley and rye are  
not clover :

Neither are straight lines curves : yet over is under  
and over.

Two and two may be four : but four and four are not  
eight :

Fate and God may be twain : but God is the same  
thing as fate.

Ask a man what he thinks, and get from a man what he feels :

God, once caught in the fact, shows you a fair pair of heels.

Body and spirit are twins : God only knows which is which :

The soul squats down in the flesh, like a tinker drunk in a ditch.

More is the whole than a part : but half is more than the whole :

Clearly, the soul is the body : but is not the body the soul ?

One and two are not one : but one and nothing is two :

Truth can hardly be false, if falsehood cannot be true.

Once the mastodon was : pterodactyls were common as cocks :

Then the mammoth was God : now is He a prize ox.

Parallels all things are : yet many of these are askew  
You are certainly I : but certainly I am not you.

Springs the rock from the plain, shoots the stream  
from the rock :

Cocks exist for the hen : but hens exist for the cock.

God, whom we see not, is : and God, who is not, we  
see :

Fiddle, we know, is diddle : and diddle, we take it,  
is dee.

## JOHN JONES'S WIFE

## I

## AT THE PIANO

## I

LOVE me and leave me ; what love bids retrieve me ?  
 can June's fist grasp May ?  
 Leave me and love me ; hopes eyed once above me  
     like spring's sprouts decay ;  
 Fall as the snow falls, when summer leaves grow  
     false—cards packed for storm's play !

## II

Nay, say Decay's self be but last May's elf, wing  
     shifted, eye sheathed—  
 Changeling in April's crib rocked, who lets 'scape  
     rills locked fast since frost breathed—  
 Skin cast (think !) adder-like, now bloom bursts  
     bladder-like,—bloom frost bequeathed ?

## III

Ah, how can fear sit and hear as love hears it grief's  
     heart's cracked grate's screech ?  
 Chance lets the gate sway that opens on hate's way  
     and shews on shame's beach  
 Crouched like an imp sly change watch sweet love's  
     shrimps lie, a toothful in each.

## IV

Time feels his tooth slip on husks wet from Truth's  
lip, which drops them and grins—.  
Shells where no throb stirs of life left in lobsters  
since joy thrilled their fins—  
Hues of the prawn's tail or comb that makes dawn  
stale, so red for our sins !

## V

Years blind and deaf use the soul's joys as refuse,  
heart's peace as manure,  
Reared whence, next June's rose shall bloom where  
our moons rose last year, just as pure :  
Moons' ends match roses' ends : men by beasts'  
noses' ends mete sin's stink's cure.

## VI

Leaves love last year smelt now feel dead love's tears  
melt—flies caught in time's mesh !  
Salt are the dews in which new time breeds new sin,  
brews blood and stews flesh ;  
Next year may see dead more germs than this weeded  
and reared them afresh.

## VII

Old times left perish, there's new time to cherish ;  
life just shifts its tune ;  
As, when the day dies, earth, half afraid, eyes the  
growth of the moon ;  
Love me and save me, take me or waive me ; death  
takes one so soon !

## II

## BY THE CLIFF

## I

Is it daytime (guess),  
You that feed my soul  
To excess  
With that light in those eyes  
And those curls drawn like a scroll  
In that round grave guise?  
No or yes?

## II

Oh, the end, I'd say!  
Such a foolish thing  
(Pure girls' play!)  
As a mere mute heart,  
Was it worth a kiss, a ring,  
This? for two must part—  
Not to-day.

## III

Look, the whole sand crawls,  
Hums, a heaving hive,  
Scrapes and scrawls—

Such a buzz and burst !  
Here just one thing's not alive,  
One that was at first—  
But life palls.

## IV

Yes, my heart, I know,  
Just my heart's stone dead—  
Yes, just so.  
Sick with heat, those worins  
Drop down scorched and overfed—  
No more need of germs !  
Let them go.

## V

Yes, but you now, look,  
You, the rouged stage female  
With a crook,  
Chalked Arcadian sham,  
You that made my soul's sleep's dream  
ail—  
Your soul fit to damn ?  
Shut the book.

## III

## ON THE SANDS

## I

THERE was nothing at all in the case (conceive)  
 But love ; being love, it was not (understand)  
 Such a thing as the years let fall (believe)  
 Like the rope's coil dropt from a fisherman's hand  
 When the boat's hauled up—" by your leave ! "

## II

So—well ! How that crab writhes—leg after leg  
 Drawn, as a worm draws ring upon ring  
 Gradually, not gladly ! Chicken or egg,  
 Is it more than the ransom (say) of a king  
 (Take my meaning at least) that I beg ?

## III

Not so ! You were ready to learn, I think,  
 What the world said ! " He loves you too well  
 (suppose)  
 For such leanings ! These poets, their love's mere  
 ink—  
 Like a flower, their flame flashes—a rosebud,  
 blows—  
 Then it all drops down at a wink !

## IV

“ Ah, the instance ! A curl of a blossomless vine  
 The vinedresser passing it sickens to see  
 And mutters ‘ Much hope (under God) of His wine  
 From the branch and the bark of a barren tree  
 Spring reared not, and winter lets pine—

## V

“ ‘ His wine that should glorify (saith He) the cup  
 That a man beholding (not tasting) might say  
 ‘ Pour out life at a draught, drain it dry, drink it up,  
 Give this one thing, and huddle the rest away—  
 Save the bitch, and be hanged to the pup ! ’ ”

## VI

“ ‘ Let it rot then ! ’ which saying, he leaves it—we’ll  
 guess,  
 Feels (if the sap move at all) thus much—  
 Yearns, and would blossom, would quicken no less,  
 Bud at an eye’s glance, flower at a touch—  
 ‘ Die, perhaps, would you not, for her ? ’—‘ Yes ! ’

## VII

“ Note the hitch there ! That’s piteous—so much  
 being done,  
 (He’ll think some day, your lover) so little to do !  
 Such infinite days to wear out, once begun !  
 Since the hand its glove holds, and the footsole its  
 shoe—  
 Overhead too there’s always the sun ! ”

## VIII

Oh, no doubt they had said so, your friends—been profuse  
 Of good counsel, wise hints—“where the trap lurks, walk warily—  
 Squeeze the fruit to the core ere you count on the juice !  
 For the graft may fail, shift, wax, change colour, wane, vary, lie—”  
 You were cautious, God knows—to what use ?

## IX

This crab's wiser, it strikes me—no twist but implies life—  
 Not a curl but's so fit you could find none fitter—  
 For the brute from its brutehood looks up thus and eyes life—  
 Stoop your soul down and listen, you'll hear it twitter,  
 Laughing lightly,—my crab's life's the wise life !

## X

Those who've read S. T. Coleridge remember how Sammy sighs  
 To his pensive (I think he says) Sara—“most soothing-sweet”—  
 Crab's bulk's less (look !) than man's—yet (quoth Cancer) I am my size,  
 And my bulk's girth contents me ! Man's maw (see ?) craves two things—wheat  
 And flesh likewise—man's gluttonous—damn his eyes !

## XI

Crab's content with crab's provender : crab's love, if  
soothing,  
Is no sweeter than pincers are soft—and a new  
sickle  
Cuts no sharper than crab's claws nip, keen as boar's  
toothing !  
Yet crab's love's no less fervent than bard's, if less  
musical—  
'Tis a new thing I'd lilt—but a true thing.

## XII

Old songs tell us, of all drinks for Englishmen  
fighting, ale's  
Out and out best : salt water contents crab, it  
seems to me,  
Though pugnacious as sailors, and skilled to steer  
right in gales  
That craze pilots, if slow to sing—"Sleep'st thou ?  
thou dream'st o' me !"  
In such love-strains as mine—or a nightingale's.

## XIII

Ah, now, look you—tail foremost, the beast sets sea-  
ward—  
The sea draws it, sand sucks it—he's wise, my  
crab !  
From the napkin out jumps his one talent—good  
steward,  
Just judge ! So a man shirks the smile or the  
stab,  
And sets his sail duly to leeward !

## xiv

Trust me? Hardly! I bid you not lean (remark)  
 On my spirit, your spirit--my flesh, your flesh--  
 Hold my hand, and tread safe through the horrible  
 dark--  
 Quench my soul as with sprinklings of snow, then  
 refresh  
 With some blast of new bellows the spark!

## xv

By no means! This were easy (men tell me) to  
 say--  
 "Give her all, throw your chance up, fall back on  
 her heart!"  
 (Say my friends) "she must change! after night  
 follows day--"  
 No such fool! I am safe set in hell, for my  
 part--  
 So let heaven do the worst now he may!.

## xvi

What they bid me? Well, this, nothing more--  
 "Tell her this--  
 'You are mine, I yours, though the whole world  
 fail--  
 Though things are not, I know there is one thing  
 which is--  
 Though the oars break, there's hope for us yet--  
 hoist the sail!  
 Oh, your heart! what's the heart? but your kiss!"

## XVII

"Then she breaks, she drops down, she lies flat at  
 your feet—  
 Take her then!" Well, I knew it—what fools are  
 men!  
 Take the bee by her horns, will your honey prove  
 sweet?  
 Sweet is grass—will you pasture your cows in a  
 fen?  
 Oh, if contraries could but once meet!

## XVIII

Love you call it? Some twitch in the moon's face  
 (observe),  
 Wet blink of her eyelid, tear dropt about dewfall,  
 Cheek flushed or obscured—does it make the sky  
 swerve?  
 Fetch the test, work the question to rags, bring to  
 proof all—  
 Find what souls want and bodies deserve!

## XIX

Ah, we know you! Your soul works to infinite  
 ends,  
 Frets, uses life up for death's sake, takes pains,  
 Flings down love's self—"but you, bear me witness,  
 my friends!  
 Have I lost spring? count up (see) the winter's  
 fresh gains!  
 Is the shrub spoilt? the pine's hair impends!"

## xx

What, you'd say—"Mark how God works ! Years  
 crowd, time wears thin,  
 Earth keeps good yet, the sun goes on, stars hold  
 their own,  
 And you'll change, climb past sight of the world, shift  
 your skin,  
 Never heeding how life moans—'more flesh now,  
 less bone !'  
 For that cheek's worn waste outline (death's grin)

## xxi

"Pleads with time still—'what good if I lose this?  
 but see—'"  
 (There's the crab gone !) " " I said, " Though earth  
 sinks," " " (you perceive ?  
 Ah, true, back there !) your soul now—" " " yet some  
 vein might be  
 (Could one find it alive in the heart's core's pulse,  
 cleave  
 Through the life-springs where "you" melts in  
 "me")—

## xxii

" " " Some true vein of the absolute soul, which sur-  
 vives  
 All that flesh runs to waste through"—and lo, this  
 fails !  
 Here's death close on us ! One life? a million of  
 lives !  
 Why choose one sail to watch of these infinite  
 sails ?  
 Time's a tennis-play? thank you, no, fives !

## XXIII

“ ‘Stop life’s ball then !’ Such folly ! melt earth  
down for that,  
Till the pure ore eludes you and leaves you raw  
scoriæ ?  
Pish, the vein’s wrong !” But you, friends—come,  
what were you at  
When God spat you out suddenly ? what was the  
story He  
Cut short thus, the growth He laid flat ? .

## XXIV

Wait ! the crab’s twice alive, mark ! Oh, worthy,  
your soul,  
Of strange ends, great results, novel labours !  
Take note,  
I reject this for one ! (ay, now, straight to the hole !  
Safe in sand there—your skirts smooth out all as  
they float !)  
I, shirk drinking through flaws in the bowl ?

## XXV

Or suppose now that rock’s cleft—grim, scored to the  
quick,  
As a man’s face kept fighting all life through gets  
scored,  
Mossed and marked with grey purulent leprosies,  
sick,  
Flat and foul as man’s life here (be swift with your  
sword—  
Cut the soul out, stuck fast where thorns prick !)

## XXVI

—Say it let the rock's heart out, its meaning, the thing  
All was made for, devised, ruled out gradually,  
planned—  
Ah, that sea-shell, perhaps—since it lies, such a ring  
Of pure colour, a cup full of sunbeams, to stand  
(Say, in Lent) at the priest's hand—(no king !)

## XXVII

Blame the cleft then? Praise rather! So—just a  
chance gone!  
Had you said—“Save the seed and secure souls  
in flower”—  
Ah, how time laughs, years palpitate, pro grapples  
con,  
Till one day you shrug shoulders—“Well, gone,  
the good hour !”  
Till one night—“Is God off now? or on ?”

## IV

## UP THE SPOUT

## I

Hi ! Just you drop that ! Stop, I say !  
 Shirk work, think slink off, twist friend's wrist ?  
 Where that spined sand's lined band's the bay—  
 Lined blind with true sea's blue, as due—  
 Promising—not to pay ?

## II

For the sea's debt leaves wet the sand ;  
 Burst worst fate's weights in one burst gun ?  
 A man's own yacht, blown—What ? off land ?  
 Tack back, or veer round here, then—queer !  
 Reef points, though—understand ?

## III

I'm blest if I do. Sigh ? be blowed !  
 Love's doves make break life's ropes, eh ? Tropes !  
 Faith's brig, baulked, sides caulked, rides at road ;  
 Hope's gropes befogged, storm-dogged and  
 bogged—  
 Clogged, water-logged, her load !

## IV

Stowed, by Jove, right and tight, away !  
No show now how best plough sea's brow,  
Wrinkling—breeze quick, tease thick, ere day,  
Clear sheer wave's sheen of green, I mean,  
With twinkling wrinkles—eh ?

## V

Sea sprinkles winkles, tinkles light  
Shells' bells—boy's joys that hap to snap !  
It's just sea's fun, breeze done, to spite  
God's rods that scourge her surge, I'd urge—  
Not proper, is it—quite ?

## VI

See, fore and aft, life's craft undone !  
Crank plank, split spritsail—mark, sea's lark !  
That grey cold sea's old sprees, begun  
When men lay dark i' the ark, no spark,  
All water—just God's fun !

## VII

Not bright, at best, his jest to these  
Seemed—screamed, shrieked, wreaked on kin for  
sin !  
When for mirth's yell earth's knell seemed please  
Some dumb new grim great whim in him  
Made Jews take chalk for cheese.

## VIII

Could God's rods bruise God's Jews ? Their jowls  
 Bobbed, sobbed, gaped, aped the plaice in face :  
 None heard, 'tis odds, his—God's—folk's howls.

Now, how must I apply, to try  
 This hookiest-beaked of owls ?

## IX

Well, I suppose God knows-- I don't.

Time's crimes mark dark men's types, in stripes  
 Broad as fen's lands men's hands were wont  
 Leave grieve unploughed, though proud and loud  
 With birds' words—No ! he won't !

## X

One never should think good impossible.

Eh ? say I'd hide this Jew's oil's cruse—  
 His shop might hold bright gold, engrossible  
 By spy—spring's air takes there no care  
 To wave the heath-flower's glossy bell !

## XI

But gold bells chime in time there, coined—

Gold ! Old Sphinx winks there—"Read my  
 screed!"  
 Doctrine Jews learn, use, burn for, joined  
 (Through new craft's stealth) with health and  
 wealth—  
 At once all three purloined !

## XII

I rose with dawn, to pawn, no doubt,  
(Miss this chance, glance untried aside?)  
John's shirt, my—no ! Ay, so—the lout !  
Let yet the door gape, store on floor  
And not a soul about ?

## XIII

Such men lay traps, perhaps—and I'm  
Weak—meek—mild—child of woe, you know !  
But theft, I doubt, my lout calls crime.  
Shrink ? Think ! Love's dawn in pawn—you  
spawn  
Of Jewry ! Just in time !

## V

## OFF THE PIER

## I

ONE last glance at these sands and stones !

Time goes past men, and lives to his liking,  
Steals, and ruins, and sometimes atones.

Why should he be king, though, and why not  
I king ?

There now, that wind, like a swarm of sick drones !

## II

Is it heaven or mere earth (come !) that moves so and  
moans ?

Oh, I knew, when you loved me, my soul was in  
flowerage—

Now the frost comes ; from prime, though, I watched  
through to nones,

Read love's litanies over—his age was not our  
age !

No more flutes in this world for me now, dear !  
trombones.

## III

All that youth once denied and made mouths at, age  
owns.

Facts put fangs out and bite us ; life stings and  
grows viperous ;

And time's fugues are a hubbub of meaningless tones.

Once we followed the piper ; now why not the piper  
us ?

Love, grown grey, plays mere solos ; we want anti-  
phones.

## IV

And we sharpen our wits up with passions for hones,  
Melt down loadstars for magnets, use women for  
whetstones,

Learn to bear with dead calms by remembering  
cyclones,

Snap strings short with sharp thumbnails, till  
silence begets tones,

Burn our souls out, shift spirits, turn skins and change  
zones ;

## V

Then the heart, when all's done with, wakes,  
whimpers, intones

Some lost fragment of tune it thought sweet ere it  
grew sick ;

(Is it life that disclaims this, or death that disowns ?)  
Mere dead metal, scrawled bars—ah, one touch,  
you make music !

Love's worth saving, youth doubts, but experience  
depones.

## VI

In the darkness (right Dickens) of Tom-All-Alone's  
 Or the Morgue out in Paris, where tragedy  
 centuples  
 Life's effects by Death's algebra, Shakespeare  
 (Malone's)  
 Might have said sleep was murdered—new  
 scholiasts have sent you pills  
 To purge text of him ! Bread? give me—Scotticè --  
 scones !

## VII

Think, what use, when youth's saddle galls bay's  
 back or roan's,  
 To seek chords on love's keys to strike, other than  
 his chords?  
 There's an error joy winks at and grief half condones,  
 Or life's counterpoint grates the C major of  
 discords—  
 "Tis man's choice 'twixt sluts rose-crowned and  
 queens age dethrones.

## VIII

I for instance might groan as a bag-pipe groans,  
 Give the flesh of my heart for sharp sorrows to  
 flagellate,  
 Grief might grind my cheeks down, age make sticks  
 of my bones,  
 (Though a queen drowned in tears must be worth  
 more than Madge elate)<sup>1</sup>  
 Rose might turn burdock, and pine-apples cones ;

<sup>1</sup> First edition :—

And my face bear his brand—mine, that once bore Love's badge  
 elate !

## IX

My skin might change to a pitiful crone's,  
My lips to a lizard's, my hair to weed,  
My features, in fact, to a series of loans ;  
Thus much is conceded ; now, you, concede  
You would hardly salute me by choice, John Jones ?

## THE POET AND THE WOODLOUSE

SAID a poet to a woodlouse—"Thou art certainly my brother ;  
 I discern in thee the markings of the fingers of the Whole ;  
 And I recognize, in spite of all the terrene smut and smother,  
 In the colours shaded off thee, the suggestions of a soul.

"Yea," the poet said, "I smell thee by some passive divination,  
 I am satisfied with insight of the measure of thine house ;  
 What had happened I conjecture, in a blank and rhythmic passion,  
 Had the æons thought of making thee a man, and me a louse.

"The broad lives of upper planets, their absorption and digestion,  
 Food and famine, health and sickness, I can scrutinize and test ;  
 Through a shiver of the senses comes a resonance of question,  
 And by proof of balanced answer I decide that I am best.

" Man, the fleshly marvel, alway feels a certain kind  
of awe stick  
To the skirts of contemplation, cramped with  
nympholeptic weight :  
Feels his faint sense charred and branded by the  
touch of solar caustic,  
On the forehead of his spirit feels the footprint of  
a Fate."

" Notwithstanding which, O poet," spake the wood-  
louse, very blandly,  
" I am likewise the created,—I the equipoise of  
thee ;  
I the particle, the atom, I behold on either hand  
lie  
The inane of measured ages that were embryos  
of me.

" I am fed with intimations, I am clothed with conse-  
quences,  
And the air I breathe is coloured with apocalyptic  
blush :  
Ripest-budded odours blossom out of dim chaotic  
stenches,  
And the Soul plants spirit-lilies in sick leagues of  
human slush.

" I am thrilled half cosmically through by crypto-  
phantic surgings,  
Till the rhythmic hills roar silent through a  
spongious kind of blee :  
And earth's soul yawns disembowelled of her pan-  
creatic organs,  
Like a madrepore if mesmerized, in rapt catalepsy.

## 812 THE POET AND THE WOODLOUSE

“ And I sacrifice, a Levite—and I palpitate, a poet ;—  
Can I close dead ears against the rush and resonance  
of things ?

Symbols in me breathe and flicker up the heights of  
the heroic ;

Earth’s worst spawn, you said, and cursed me ?  
look ! approve me ! I have wings.

“ Ah, men’s poets ! men’s conventions crust you round  
and swathe you mist-like,

And the world’s wheels grind your spirits down the  
dust ye overtrod :

We stand sinlessly stark-naked in effulgence of the  
Christ-light,

And our polecat chokes not cherubs ; and our skunk  
smells sweet to God.

“ For He grasps the pale Created by some thousand  
vital handles,

Till a Godshine, bluely winnowed through the sieve  
of thunderstorms,

Shimmers up the non-existent round the churning feet  
of angels ;

And the atoms of that glory may be seraphs, being  
worms.

“ Friends, your nature underlies us and your pulses  
overplay us ;

Ye, with social sores unbandaged, can ye sing right  
and steer wrong ?

For the transient cosmic, rooted in imperishable chaos,  
Must be kneaded into drastics as material for a  
song.

“Eyes once purged from homebred vapours through  
humanitarian passion  
See that monochrome a despot through a democratic  
prism ;  
Hands that rip the soul up, reeking from divine evis-  
ceration,  
Not with priestlike oil anoint him, but a stronger-  
smelling chrism.

“Pass, O poet, retransfigured ! God, the psychometric  
rhapsode,  
Fills with fiery rhythms the silence, stings the dark  
with stars that blink ;  
All eternities hang round him like an old man’s clothes  
collapsed,  
While he makes his mundane music—**AND HE WILL  
NOT STOP, I THINK’**

## THE PERSON OF THE HOUSE

## IDYL CCCLXVI

## THE ACCOMPANIMENTS

1. THE MONTHLY NURSE
2. THE CAUDLE
3. THE SENTENCES

## THE KID

## 1. THE MONTHLY NURSE

THE sickly airs had died of damp ;  
 Through huddling leaves the holy chime  
 Flagged ; I, expecting Mrs. Gamp,  
 Thought — “ Will the woman come in time ? ”  
 Upstairs I knew the matron bed  
 Held her whose name confirms all joy  
 To me ; and tremblingly I said,  
 “ Ah ! will it be a girl or boy ? ”  
 And, soothed, my fluttering doubts began  
 To sift the pleasantness of things ;  
 Developing the unshapen man,  
 An eagle baffled of his wings ;  
 Considering, next, how fair the state  
 And large the license that sublimes  
 A nineteenth-century female fate—  
 Sweet cause that thralls my liberal rhymes !

And Chastities and colder Shames,  
 Decorums mute and marvellous,  
 And fair Behaviour that reclaims  
 All fancies grown erroneous,  
 Moved round me musing, till my choice  
 Faltered. A female in a wig  
 Stood by me, and a drouthy voice  
 Announced her Mrs. Betsy Prig.

## 2. THE CAUDLE

Sweet Love that sways the reeling years,  
 The crown and chief of certitudes,  
 For whose calm eyes and modest ears  
 Time writes the rule and text of prudes—  
 That, spliced, stoops a nuptial head,  
 Nor chooses to live blindly free,  
 But, with all pulses quieted,  
 Plays tunes of domesticity—  
 That Love I sing of and have sung  
 And mean to sing till Death yawn sheer,  
 He rules the music of my tongue,  
 Stills it or quickens, there or here.  
 I say but this : as we went up  
 I heard the Monthly give a sniff  
 And “if the big dog makes the pup—”  
 She murmured—then repeated “if !”  
 The caudle on a slab was placed ;  
 She snuffed it, snorting loud and long ;  
 I fled—I would not stop to taste—  
 And dreamed all night of things gone wrong.

## 3. THE SENTENCES

## I

Abortive Love is half a sin ;  
But Love's abortions dearer far  
Than wheels without an axle-pin  
Or life without a married star.

## II

My rules are hard to understand  
For him whom sensual rules depress ;  
A bandbox in a midwife's hand  
May hold a costlier bridal dress.

## III

" I like her not ; in fact I loathe ;  
Bugs hath she brought from London beds."  
Friend ! wouldest thou rather bear their growth  
Or have a baby with two heads ?

## IDYL CCCLXVI

## THE KID

My spirit, in the doorway's pause,  
 Flattered with fancies in my breast ;  
 Obsequious to all decent laws,  
 I felt exceedingly distressed.  
 I knew it rude to enter there  
 With Mrs. V. in such a state ;  
 And, 'neath a magisterial air,  
 Felt actually indelicate.  
 I knew the nurse began to grin ;  
 I turned to greet my Love. Said she—  
 “Confound your modesty, come in !  
 —What shall we call the darling, V. ? ”  
 (There are so many charming names !  
 Girls'—Peg, Moll, Doll, Fan, Kate, Blanche,  
 Bab :  
 Boys'—Mahershahal-hashbaz, James,  
 Luke, Nick, Dick, Mark, Aminadab.)

Lo, as the acorn to the oak,  
 As well-heads to the river's height,  
 As to the chicken the moist yolk,  
 As to high noon the day's first white—  
 Such is the baby to the man.  
 There, straddling one red arm and leg,  
 • Lay my last work, in length a span,  
 Half hatched, and conscious of the egg.

A creditable child, I hoped ;  
And half a score of joys to be  
Through sunny lengths of prospect sloped  
Smooth to the bland futurity.  
O, fate surpassing other dooms,  
O, hope above all wrecks of time !  
O, light that fills all vanquished glooms,  
O, silent song o'ermastering rhyme !  
I covered either little foot,  
I drew the strings about its waist ;  
Pink as the unshell'd inner fruit,  
But barely decent, hardly chaste,  
Its nudity had startled me ;  
But when the petticoats were on,  
"I know," I said ; "its name shall be  
Paul Cyril Athanasius John."  
"Why," said my wife, "the child's a girl."  
My brain swooned, sick with failing sense ;  
With all perception in a whirl,  
How could I tell the difference ?  
"Nay," smiled the nurse, "the child's a boy."  
And all my soul was soothed to hear  
That so it was : then startled Joy  
Mocked Sorrow with a doubtful tear.  
And I was glad as one who sees  
For sensual optics things unmeet :  
As purity makes passion freeze,  
So faith warns science off her beat.  
Blessed are they that have not seen,  
And yet, not seeing, have believed :  
To walk by faith, as preached the Dean,  
And not by sight, have I achieved.  
Let love, that does not look, believe ; •  
Let knowledge, that believes not, look :

Truth pins her trust on falsehood's sleeve,  
While reason blunders by the book.  
Then Mrs. Prig addressed me thus ;  
“ Sir, if you'll be advised by me,  
You'll leave the blessed babe to us ; . . .  
It's my belief he wants his tea.”

LAST WORDS OF A SEVENTH-  
RATE POET

BILL, I feel far from quite right—if not further :  
already the pill  
Seems, if I may say so, to bubble inside me. A poet's  
heart, Bill,  
Is a sort of a thing that is made of the tenderest young  
bloom on a fruit.  
You may pass me the mixture at once, if you please—  
and I'll thank you to boot  
For that poem—and then for the julep. This really  
is damnable stuff !  
(Not the poem, of course.) Do you snivel, old  
friend ? well, it's nasty enough,  
But I think I can stand it—I think so—ay, Bill, and  
I could were it worse.  
But I'll tell you a thing that I can't and I won't.  
'Tis the old, old curse—  
The gall of the gold-fruited Eden, the lure of the  
angels that fell.  
'Tis the core of the fruit **snake-spotted** in the hush of  
the **shadows of hell**,  
Where a lost man sits with his head drawn down,  
and a weight on his eyes.  
You know what I mean, Bill—the tender and delicate  
mother of lies,

Woman, the devil's first cousin—no doubt by the female side.

The breath of her mouth still moves in my hair, and I know that she lied,

And I feel her, Bill, sir, inside me—she operates there like a drug.

Were it better to live like a beetle, to wear the cast clothes of a slug,

Be the louse in the locks of the hangman, the mote in the eye of the bat,

Than to live and believe in a woman, who must one day grow aged and fat?

You must see it's preposterous, Bill, sir. And yet, how the thought of it clings!

I have lived out my time—I have prigged lots of verse—I have kissed (ah, that stings!)

Lips that swore I had cribbed every line that I wrote on them—cribbed—honour bright!

Then I loathed her; but now I forgive her; perhaps after all she was right.

Yet I swear it was shameful—unwomanly, Bill, sir—to say that I fibbed.

Why, the poems were mine, for I bought them in print. Cribbed? of course they were cribbed.

Yet I wouldn't say, cribbed from the French—Lady Bathsheba thought it was vulgar—

But picked up on the banks of the Don, from the lips of a highly intelligent Bulgar.

I'm aware, Bill, that's out of all metre—I can't help it—I'm none of your sort

Who set metres, by Jove, above morals—not exactly. They don't go to Court—

As I mentioned one night to that cowslip-faced pet, Lady Rahab Redrabbit

(Whom the Marquis calls Drabby for short). Well,  
I say, if you want a thing, grab it—  
That's what I did, at least, when I took that *danseuse*  
to a swell *cabaret*,  
Where expense was no consideration. A poet, you  
see, now and then must be gay.  
(I declined to give more, I remember, than fifty  
centeems to the waiter;  
For I asked him if that was enough; and the  
jackanapes answered—*Peut-être*.  
Ah, it isn't in you to draw up a *menu* such as ours  
was, though humble:  
When I told Lady Shoreditch, she thought it a  
regular *grand tout ensemble*.)  
She danced the heart out of my body—I can see in  
the glare of the lights,  
I can see her again as I saw her that evening, in  
spangles and tights.  
When I spoke to her first, her eye flashed so,  
I heard—as I fancied—the spark whiz  
From her eyelid—I said so next day to that jealous  
old fool of a Marquis.  
She reminded me, Bill, of a lovely volcano, whose  
entrails are lava—  
Or (you know my *penchant* for original types) of the  
upas in Java.  
In the curve of her sensitive nose was a singular  
species of dimple,  
Where the flush was the mark of an angel's creased  
kiss—if it wasn't a pimple.  
Now I'm none of your bashful John Bulls who don't  
know a pilau from a puggaree  
Nor a chili, by George, from a chopstick. So, sir,  
I marched into her snuggery,

And proposed a light supper by way of a finish.  
I treated her, Bill,

To six *entrées* of ortolans, sprats, maraschino, and  
oysters. It made her quite ill.

Of which moment of sickness I took some advantage.  
I held her like this,

And availed myself, sir, of her sneezing, to shut up  
her lips with a kiss.

The waiters, I saw, were quite struck ; and I felt,  
I may say, *entre nous*,

Like Don Juan, Lauzun, Almaviva, Lord Byron, and  
old Richelieu.

(You'll observe, Bill, that rhyme's quite Parisian ; a  
Londoner, sir, would have cited old Q.

People tell me the French in my verses recalls that  
of Jeames or John Thomas : I

Must maintain it's as good as the average accent of  
British diplomacy.)

These are moments that thrill the whole spirit with  
spasms that excite and exalt.

I stood more than the peer of the great Casanova—  
you know—de Seingalt.

She was worth, sir, I say it without hesitation, two  
brace of her sisters.

Ah, why should all honey turn rhubarb—all cherries  
grow onions—all kisses leave blisters ?

Oh, and why should I ask myself questions ? I've  
heard such before—once or twice.

Ah, I can't understand it—but, O, I imagine it strikes  
me as nice.

There's a deity shapes us our ends, sir, rough-hew  
them, my boy, how we will—

As I stated myself in a poem I published last year,  
you know, Bill—

Where I mentioned that that was the question—to be,  
or, by Jove, not to be.

Ah, it's something—you'll think so hereafter—to wait  
on a poet like me.

Had I written no more than those verses on that  
Countess I used to call Pussy—

Yes, Minette or Manon—and—you'll hardly believe  
it—she said they were all out of Musset.

Now I don't say they weren't—but what then? and  
I don't say they were—I'll bet pounds against  
pennies on

The subject—I wish I may never die Laureate, if  
some of them weren't out of Tennyson.

And I think—I don't like to be certain, with Death,  
so to speak, by me, frowning—

But I think there were some—say a dozen, perhaps,  
or a score—out of Browning.

And—though God knows his poems are not (as all  
mine are, sir) perfumed with orris—

Or at least with patchouli—I wouldn't be sworn there  
were none out of Morris.

And it's possible—only the legend of Circe is quite an  
old yarn—old

As the hills—that I might have been thinking, perhaps,  
of a poem by Arnold

When I sang how Ulysses—Odysseus I mean—would  
have yearned to dishevel her

Bright hair with his kisses, and painted myself at her  
feet—a Strayed Reveller.

As for poets who go on a contrary tack to what I go  
and you go—

You remember my lyrics *translated*—like “sweet  
bully Bottom”—from Hugo?

Though I will say it's curious that simply on just  
that account there should be  
Men so bold as to say that not one of my poems was  
written by me.  
It would stir the political bile or the physical spleen  
of a drab or a Tory  
To hear critics disputing my claim to Empedocles,  
Maud, and the Laboratory.  
Yes, it's singular—nay, I can't think of a parallel  
(ain't it a high lark ?  
As that Countess would say)—there are few men  
believe it was I wrote the Ode to a Skylark.  
And it often has given myself and Lord Albert no end  
of diversion  
To hear fellows maintain to my face it was Words-  
worth who wrote the Excursion,  
When they know that whole reams of the verses  
recur in my authorized works  
Here and there, up and down ! Why, such readers  
are infidels—heretics—Turks.  
And the pitiful critics who think in their paltry pre-  
sumption to pay me a  
Pretty compliment, pairing me off, sir, with Keats—  
as if *he* could write Lamia !  
While I never produced a more characteristic and  
exquisite book,  
One that gave me more real satisfaction, than did, on  
the whole, Lalla Rookh.  
Was it there that I called on all debtors, being  
pestered myself by a creditor, (he  
Isn't paid yet) to rise, by the proud appellation of  
bondsmen—hereditary ?  
Yes—I think so. And yet, on my word, I can't think  
why I think it was so.

It more probably was in the poem I made a few seasons ago

On that Duchess—her name now? ah, thus one out-lives a whole cycle of joys!

Fair supplants black and brown succeeds golden.  
The poem made rather a noise.

And indeed I have seen worse verses; but as for the woman, my friend—

Though his neck had been never so stiff, she'd have made a philosopher bend.

As the broken heart of a sunset that bleeds pure purple and gold

In the shudder and swoon of the sickness of colour, the agonies old

That engirdle the brows of the day when he sinks with a spasm into rest

And the splash of his kingly blood is dashed on the skirts of the west,

Even such was my own, when I felt how much sharper than any snake's tooth

Was the passion that made me mistake Lady Eve for her niece Lady Ruth.

The whole world, colourless, lapsed. Earth fled from my feet like a dream,

And the whirl of the walls of Space was about me, and moved as a stream

Flowing and ebbing and flowing all night to a weary tune

(“Such as that of my verses”? Get out!) in the face of a sick-souled moon.

The keen stars kindled and faded and fled, and the wind in my ears

Was the wail of a poet for failure—you needn't come snivelling tears

And spoiling the mixture, confound you, with dropping  
your tears into that !  
I know I'm pathetic—I must be—and you soft-  
hearted and fat,  
And I'm grateful of course for your kindness—there,  
don't come hugging me, now—  
But because a fellow's pathetic, you needn't low like  
a cow.

I should like—on my soul, I should like—to re-  
member—but somehow I can't—  
If the lady whose love has reduced me to this was  
the niece or the aunt.  
But whichever it was, I feel sure, when I published  
my lays of last year  
(You remember their title—The Tramp—only seven-  
and-sixpence—not dear),  
I sent her a copy (perhaps her tears fell on the title-  
page—yes—  
I should like to imagine she wept)—and the Bride of  
Bulgaria (MS.)  
I forwarded with it. The lyrics, no doubt, she found  
bitter—and sweet ;  
But the Bride she rejected, you know, with expressions  
I will not repeat.  
Well—she did no more than all publishers did.  
Though my prospects were marred,  
I can pity and pardon them. Blindness, mere blind-  
ness ! And yet it was hard.  
For a poet, Bill, is a blossom—a bird—a billow—a  
breeze—  
A kind of creature that moves among men as a wind  
among trees.

And a bard who is also the pet of patricians and  
dowagers doubly can  
Express his contempt for canaille in his fables where  
beasts are republican.

Yet with all my disdainful forgiveness for men so  
deficient in *ton*

I cannot but feel it was cruel—I cannot but think it  
was wrong.

I with the heat of my heart still burning against all  
bars

As the fire of the dawn, so to speak, in the blanched  
blank brows of the stars—

I with my tremulous lips made pale by musical  
breath—

I with the shade in my eyes that was left by the kisses  
of Death—

(For Death came near me in youth, and touched my  
face with his face,  
And put in my lips the songs that belong to a desolate  
place—

Desolate truly, my heart and my lips, till her kiss  
filled them up !)

I with my soul like wine poured out with my flesh for  
the cup—

It was hard for me—it was hard—Bill, Bill, you great  
owl, was it not?

For the day creeps in like a Fate: and I think my  
grand passion is rot :

And I dreamily seem to perceive, by the light of a  
life's dream done,

The lotion at six, and the mixture at ten, and the  
draught before one.

Yes—I feel rather better. Man's life is a mull, at  
the best ;  
And the patent perturbator pills are like bullets of  
lead in my chest.  
When a man's whole spirit is like the lost Pleiad, a  
blown-out star,  
Is there comfort in Holloway, Bill ? is there hope of  
salvation in Parr ?  
True, most things work to their end—and an end  
that the shroud overlaps.  
Under lace, under silk, under gold, sir, the skirt of  
a winding-sheet flaps—  
Which explains, if you think of it, Bill, why I can't,  
though my soul thereon broodeth,  
Quite make out if I loved Lady Tamar as much as  
I loved Lady Judith.  
Yet her dress was of violet velvet, her hair was  
hyacinth-hued,  
And her ankles—no matter. A face where the music  
of every mood  
Was touched by the tremulous fingers of passionate  
feeling, and made  
Strange melodies, scornful, but sweeter than strings  
whereon sorrow has played  
To enrapture the hearing of mirth when his garland  
of blossom and green  
Turns to lead on the anguished forehead—"you don't  
understand what I mean" ?  
Well, of course I knew you were stupid—you always  
were stupid at school—  
Now don't say you weren't—but I'm hanged if I  
thought you were quite such a fool !  
You don't see the point of all this ? I was talking of  
sickness and death—

In that poem I made years ago, I said this—" Love,  
the flower-time whose breath  
Smells sweet through a summer of kisses and  
perfumes an autumn of tears  
Is sadder at root than a winter—its hopes heavy-  
hearted like fears.

Though I love your Grace more than I love little  
Letty, the maid of the mill,  
Yet the heat of your lips when I kiss them" (you see  
we were intimate, Bill)

" And the beat of the delicate blood in your eyelids  
of azure and white  
Leave the taste of the grave in my mouth and the  
shadow of death on my sight.

Fill the cup—twine the chaplet—come into the garden  
—get out of the house—

Drink to *me* with your eyes—there's a banquet behind,  
where worms only carouse !

As I said to sweet Katie, who lived by the brook on  
the land Philip farmed—

Worms shall graze where my kisses found pasture!"

The Duchess, I may say, was charmed.

It was read to the Duke, and he cried like a child.  
If you'll give me a pill,

I'll go on till past midnight. That poem was said to  
be—Somebody's, Bill.

But you see you can always be sure of my hand as  
the mother that bore me

By the fact that I never write verse which has never  
been written before me.

Other poets—I blush for them, Bill—may adore and  
repudiate in turn a

Libitina, perhaps, or Pandemos ; my Venus, you  
know, is Laverna.

Nay, that epic of mine which begins from foundations  
the Bible is built on—  
“Of man’s *first* disobedience”—I’ve heard it at-  
tributed, dammy, to Milton.  
Well, it’s lucky for them that it’s not worth my while,  
as I may say, to break spears  
With the hirelings, forsooth, of the press who assert  
that Othello was Shakespeare’s.  
When he that can run, sir, may read—if he borrows  
the book, or goes on tick—  
In my poems the bit that describes how the Hellespont  
joins the Propontic.  
There are men, I believe, who will tell you that Gray  
wrote the whole of The Bard—  
Or that I didn’t write half the Elegy, Bill, in a  
Country Churchyard.  
When you know that my poem, The Poet, begins—  
“Ruin seize thee!” and ends  
With recapitulations of horrors the poet invokes on  
his friends.  
And I’ll swear, if you look at the dirge on my relatives  
under the turf, you  
Will perceive it winds up with some lines on myself—  
and begins with the curfew.  
Now you’ll grant it’s more probable, Bill—as a man  
of the world, if you please—  
That all these should have prigged from myself than  
that I should have prigged from all these.  
I could cry when I think of it, friend, if such tears  
would comport with my dignity,  
That the author of Christabel ever should smart from  
such vulgar malignity.  
(You remember perhaps that was one of the first little  
things that I caroled

After finishing Marmion, the Princess, the Song of the Shirt, and Childe Harold.)

Oh, doubtless it always has been so—Ah, doubtless it always will be—

There are men who would say that myself is a different person from me.

Better the porridge of patience a poor man snuffs in his plate

Than the water of poisonous laurels distilled by the fingers of hate.

’Tis a dark-purple sort of a moonlighted kind of a midnight, I know ;

You remember those verses I wrote on Irene, from Edgar A. Poe ?

It was Lady Aholibah Levison, daughter of old Lord St. Giles,

Who inspired those delectable strains, and rewarded her bard with her smiles.

There are tasters who’ve sipped of Castalia, who don’t look on *my* brew as *the* brew :

There are fools who can’t think why the names of my heroines of title should always be Hebrew.

’Twas my comrade, Sir Alister Knox, said, “Noo, dinna ye fash wi’ Apollo, mon ;

Gang to Jewry for wives and for concubines, lad—look at David and Solomon.

And it gives an erotico-scriptural twang,” said that high-born young man, “—tickles

The lug” (he meant ear) “of the reader—to throw in a touch of the Canticles.”

So I versified half of The Preacher—it took me a week, working slowly. Bah !

You don't half know the sex, Bill—they like it. And what if her name was Aholibah?

I recited her charms, in conjunction with those of a girl at the *café*,

In a poem I published in collaboration with Templeton (Taffy).

There are prudes in a world full of envy—and some of them thought it too strong

To compare an earl's daughter by name with a girl at a French *restaurant*.

I regarded her, though, with the chivalrous eyes of a knight-errant on quest;

I may say I don't know that I ever felt prouder, old friend, of a conquest.

And when I've been made happy, I never have cared a brass farthing who knew it; I

Thank my stars I'm as free from mock-modesty, friend, as from vulgar fatuity.

I can't say if my spirit retains—for the subject appears to me misty—any tie

To such associations as Poesy weaves round the records of Christianity.

There are bards—I may be one myself—who delight in their skill to unlock a lip's

Rosy secrets by kisses and whispers of texts from the charming Apocalypse.

It was thus that I won, by such biblical pills of poetical manna,

From two elders—Sir Seth and Lord Isaac—the liking of Lady Susanna.

But I left her—a woman to me is no more than a match, sir, at tennis is—

When I heard she'd gone off with my valet, and burnt my rhymed version of Genesis.

You may see by my shortness of speech that my time's almost up : I perceive  
 That my new-fangled brevity strikes you : but don't —though the public will—grieve.  
 As it's sometimes my whim to be vulgar, it's sometimes my whim to be brief ;  
 As when once I observed, after Heine, that "she was a harlot, and I" (which is true) "was a thief."  
 (Though you hardly should cite this particular line, by the way, as an instance of absolute brevity : I'm aware, man, of that ; so you needn't disgrace yourself, sir, by such grossly mistimed and impertinent levity.)  
 I don't like to break off, any more than you wish me to stop : but my fate is  
 Not to vent half a million such rhymes without blockheads exclaiming—

## JAM SATIS.

*Specimen from the speaker's original poems.*

Come into the orchard, Anne,  
 For the dark owl, Night, has fled,  
 And Phosphor slumbers, as well as he can  
 With a daffodil sky for a bed :  
 And the musk of the roses perplexes a man,  
 And the pimpernel muddles his head.

## SONNET FOR A PICTURE

THAT nose is out of drawing. With a gasp,  
She pants upon the passionate lips that ache  
With the red drain of her own mouth, and make  
A monochord of colour. Like an asp,  
One lithe lock wriggles in his rutilant grasp.  
Her bosom is an oven of myrrh, to bake  
Love's white warm shewbread to a browner cake.  
The lock his fingers clench has burst its hasp.  
The legs are absolutely abominable.  
Ah ! what keen overgust of wild-eyed woes  
Flags in that bosom, flushes in that nose ?  
Nay ! Death sets riddles for desire to spell,  
Responsive. What red hem earth's passion sews,  
But may be ravenously unripped in hell ?

## NEPHELIDIA

FROM the depth of the dreamy decline of the dawn  
 through a notable nimbus of nebulous noonshine,  
 Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-flower that  
 flickers with fear of the flies as they float,  
 Are they looks of our lovers that lustrosly lean from  
 a marvel of mystic miraculous moonshine,  
 These that we feel in the blood of our blushes that  
 thicken and threaten with throbs through the  
 throat ?

Thicken and thrill as a theatre thronged at appeal of  
 an actor's appalled agitation,  
 Fainter with fear of the fires of the future than pale  
 with the promise of pride in the past ;

Flushed with the famishing fullness of fever that  
 reddens with radiance of rathe recreation,  
 Gaunt as the ghastliest of glimpses that gleam  
 through the gloom of the gloaming when ghosts  
 go aghast ?

Nay, for the nick of the tick of the time is a tremulous  
 touch on the temples of terror,  
 Strained as the sinews yet strenuous with strife of  
 the dead who is dumb as the dust-heaps of death :  
 Surely no soul is it, sweet as the spasm of erotic emo-  
 tional exquisite error,  
 Bathed in the balms of beatified bliss, beatific itself  
 by beatitude's breath.

Surely no spirit or sense of a soul that was soft to the spirit and soul of our senses

Sweetens the stress of suspiring suspicion that sobs in the semblance and sound of a sigh ;

Only this oracle opens Olympian, in mystical moods and triangular tenses—

“ Life is the lust of a lamp for the light that is dark till the dawn of the day when we die.”

Mild is the mirk and monotonous music of memory, melodiously mute as it may be,

While the hope in the heart of a hero is bruised by the breach of men’s rapiers, resigned to the rod ;

Made meek as a mother whose bosom-beats bound with the bliss-bringing bulk of a balm-breathing baby,

As they grope through the grave-yard of creeds, under skies growing green at a groan for the grimness of God.

Blank is the book of his bounty beholden of old, and its binding is blacker than bluer :

Out of blue into black is the scheme of the skies, and their dews are the wine of the bloodshed of things ;

Till the darkling desire of delight shall be free as a rawn that is freed from the fangs that pursue her,

Till the heart-beats of hell shall be hushed by a hymn from the hunt that has harried the kennel of kings.



**A**

**MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY**

**AND OTHER POEMS**



# A MIDSUMMER HOLIDAY

To THEODORE WATTS



## I

## THE SEABOARD

THE sea is at ebb, and the sound of her utmost word  
 Is soft as the least wave's lapse in a still small reach.  
 From bay into bay, on quest of a goal deferred,  
 From headland ever to headland and breach to  
 breach

Where earth gives ear to the message that all days  
 preach  
 With changes of gladness and sadness that cheer and  
 chide,

The lone way lures me along by a chance untried  
 That haply, if hope dissolve not and faith be whole,  
 Not all for nought shall I seek, with a dream for  
 guide.

The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

The trackless ways are untravelled of sail or bird,  
 The hoar wave hardly recedes from the soundless  
 beach.

The silence of instant noon goes nigh to be heard,  
 The viewless void to be visible : all and each,  
 A closure of calm no clamour of storm can breach  
 Concludes and confines and absorbs them on either  
 side,

All forces of light and of life and the live world's  
 pride.

Sands hardly ruffled of ripples that hardly roll  
Seem ever to show as in reach of a swift brief stride  
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

The waves are a joy to the seamew, the meads to the herd,  
And a joy to the heart is a goal that it may not reach.  
No sense that for ever the limits of sense engird,  
No hearing or sight that is vassal to form or speech,  
Learns ever the secret that shadow and silence teach,  
Hears ever the notes that or ever they swell subside,  
Sees ever the light that lights not the loud world's tide,  
Clasps ever the cause of the lifelong scheme's control  
Wherethrough we pursue, till the waters of life be dried,  
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

Friend, what have we sought or seek we, whate'er betide,  
Though the seaboard shift its mark from afar described,  
But aims whence ever anew shall arise the soul ?  
Love, thought, song, life, but show for a glimpse and hide  
The goal that is not, and ever again the goal.

## II

## A HAVEN

EAST and north a waste of waters, south and west  
Lonelier lands than dreams in sleep would feign  
to be,

When the soul goes forth on travel, and is prest  
Round and compassed in with clouds that flash and  
flee.

Dells without a streamlet, downs without a tree,  
Cirques of hollow cliff that crumble, give their guest  
Little hope, till hard at hand he pause, to see  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side  
nest.

Many a lone long mile, by many a headland's crest,  
Down by many a garden dear to bird and bee,  
Up by many a sea-down's bare and breezy breast,  
Winds the sandy strait of road where flowers run  
free.

Here along the deep steep lanes by field and lea  
Knights have caroled, pilgrims chanted, on their  
quest,

Haply, ere a roof rose toward the bleak strand's lee,  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side  
nest.

Are the wild lands cursed perchance of time, or blest,  
Sad with fear or glad with comfort of the sea ?  
Are the ruinous towers of churches fallen on rest  
Watched of wanderers woful now, glad once as we,  
When the night has all men's eyes and hearts in fee,  
When the soul bows down dethroned and dispossest ?  
Yet must peace keep guard, by day's and night's  
decree,  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side  
nest.

Friend, the lonely land is bright for you and me  
All its wild ways through : but this methinks is best,  
Here to watch how kindly time and change agree  
Where the small town smiles, a warm still sea-side  
nest.

## III

## ON A COUNTRY ROAD

ALONG these low pleached lanes, on such a day,  
So soft a day as this, through shade and sun,  
With glad grave eyes that scanned the glad wild  
way,  
And heart still hovering o'er a song begun,  
And smile that warmed the world with benison,  
Our father, lord long since of lordly rhyme,  
Long since hath haply ridden, when the lime  
Bloomed broad above him, flowering where he came.  
Because thy passage once made warm this clime,  
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each year that England clothes herself with May,  
She takes thy likeness on her. Time hath spun  
Fresh raiment all in vain and strange array  
For earth and man's new spirit, fain to shun  
Things past for dreams of better to be won,  
Through many a century since thy funeral chime  
Rang, and men deemed it death's most direful crime  
To have spared not thee for very love or shame ;  
And yet, while mists round last year's memories  
climb,  
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Each turn of the old wild road whereon we stray,  
Meseems, might bring us face to face with one  
Whom seeing we could not but give thanks, and pray  
For England's love our father and her son  
To speak with us as once in days long done  
With all men, sage and churl and monk and mime,  
Who knew not as we know the soul sublime  
That sang for song's love more than lust of fame.  
Yet, though this be not, yet, in happy time,  
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

Friend, even as bees about the flowering thyme,  
Years crowd on years, till hoar decay begrime  
Names once beloved ; but, seeing the sun the same,  
As birds of autumn fain to praise the prime,  
Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name.

## IV

## THE MILL GARDEN

STATELY stand the sunflowers, glowing down the  
garden-side,  
Ranged in royal rank arow along the warm grey  
wall,  
Whence their deep disks burn at rich midnoon afire  
with pride,  
Even as though their beams indeed were sunbeams,  
and the tall  
Sceptral stems bore stars whose reign endures, not  
flowers that fall.  
Lowlier laughs and basks the kindlier flower of  
homelier fame,  
Held by love the sweeter that it blooms in Shake-  
speare's name,  
Fragrant yet as though his hand had touched and  
made it thrill,  
Like the whole world's heart, with warm new life  
and gladdening flame.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the  
mill !

Softlier here the flower-soft feet of refluent seasons  
glide,  
Lightlier breathes the long low note of change's  
gentler call.

Wind and storm and landslip feed the lone sea's  
gulf outside,  
Half a seamew's first flight hence ; but scarce may  
these appal  
Peace, whose perfect seal is set for signet here on all.  
Steep and deep and sterile, under fields no plough  
can tame,  
Dip the cliffs full-fledged with poppies red as love or  
shame,  
Wide wan daisies bleak and bold, or herbage harsh  
and chill ;  
Here the full clove pinks and wallflowers crown the  
love they claim.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the  
mill !

All the place breathes low, but not for fear lest ill  
betide,  
Soft as roses answering roses, or a dove's recall.  
Little heeds it how the seaward banks may stoop and  
slide,  
How the winds and years may hold all outer things  
in thrall,  
How their wrath may work on hoar church tower  
and boundary wall.  
Far and wide the waste and ravin of their rule pro-  
claim  
Change alone the changeless lord of things, alone  
the same :  
Here a flower is stronger than the winds that work  
their will,  
Or the years that wing their way through darkness  
toward their aim.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the  
mill !

Friend, the home that smiled us welcome hither when  
we came,  
When we pass again with summer, surely should  
reclaim  
Somewhat given of heart's thanksgiving more than  
words fulfil—  
More than song, were song more sweet than all but  
love, might frame.  
Fair befall the fair green close that lies below the  
mill !

## V

## A SEA-MARK

RAINS have left the sea-banks ill to climb :  
Waveward sinks the loosening seaboard's floor :  
Half the sliding cliffs are mire and slime.  
Earth, a fruit rain-rotted to the core,  
Drops dissolving down in flakes, that pour  
Dense as gouts from eaves grown foul with grime.  
One sole rock which years that scathe not score  
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Time were even as even the rainiest clime,  
Life were even as even this lapsing shore,  
Might not aught outlive their trustless prime :  
Vainly fear would wail or hope implore,  
Vainly grief revile or love adore  
Seasons clothed in sunshine, rain, or rime.  
Now for me one comfort held in store  
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Once, by fate's default or chance's crime,  
Each apart, our burdens each we bore ;  
Heard, in monotones like bells that chime,  
Chime the sounds of sorrows, float and soar

Joy's full carols, near or far before ;  
Heard not yet across the alternate rhyme  
Time's tongue tell what sign set fast of yore  
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

Friend, the sign we knew not heretofore  
Towers in sight here present and sublime.  
Faith in faith established evermore  
Stands a sea-mark in the tides of time.

## VI

## THE CLIFFSIDE PATH

SEAWARD goes the sun, and homeward by the down  
We, before the night upon his grave be sealed.  
Low behind us lies the bright steep murmuring  
town,  
High before us heaves the steep rough silent field.  
Breach by ghastlier breach, the cliffs collapsing  
yield :  
Half the path is broken, half the banks divide ;  
Flawed and crumbled, riven and rent, they cleave  
and slide  
Toward the ridged and wrinkled waste of girdling  
sand  
Deep beneath, whose furrows tell how far and wide  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Star by star on the unsunned waters twiring down.  
Golden spear-points glance against a silver shield.  
Over banks and bents, across the headland's crown,  
As by pulse of gradual plumes through twilight  
wheeled,  
Soft as sleep, the waking wind awakes the weald.  
Moor and copse and fallow, near or far descried,  
Feel the mild wings move, and gladden where they  
glide :

Silence, uttering love that all things understand,  
Bids the quiet fields forget that hard beside  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Yet may sight, ere all the hoar soft shade grow  
brown,  
Hardly reckon half the rifts and rents unhealed  
Where the scarred cliffs downward sundering drive  
and drown,

Hewn as if with stroke of swords in tempest steeled,  
Wielded as the night's will and the wind's may  
wield.

Crowned and zoned in vain with flowers of autumn-tide,

Soon the blasts shall break them, soon the waters  
hide ;

Soon, where late we stood, shall no man ever stand.  
Life and love seek harbourage on the landward side :  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

Friend, though man be less than these, for all his  
pride,

Yet, for all his weakness, shall not hope abide ?

Wind and change can wreck but life and waste but  
land :

Truth and trust are sure, though here till all subside  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of the strand.

## VII

## IN THE WATER

THE sea is awake, and the sound of the song of the  
joy of her waking is rolled  
From afar to the star that recedes, from anear to the  
wastes of the wild wide shore.  
Her call is a trumpet compelling us homeward : if  
dawn in her east be acold,  
From the sea shall we crave not her grace to rekindle  
the life that it kindled before,  
Her breath to requicken, her bosom to rock us, her  
kisses to bless as of yore ?  
For the wind, with his wings half open, at pause in  
the sky, neither fettered nor free,  
Leans waveward and flutters the ripple to laughter :  
and fain would the twain of us be  
Where lightly the wave yearns forward from under  
the curve of the deep dawn's dome,  
And, full of the morning and fired with the pride of  
the glory thereof and the glee,  
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and  
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Life holds not an hour that is better to live in : the  
past is a tale that is told,  
The future a sun-flecked shadow, alive and asleep,  
with a blessing in store.

As we give us again to the waters, the rapture of  
limbs that the waters enfold  
Is less than the rapture of spirit whereby, though the  
burden it quits were sore,  
Our souls and the bodies they wield at their will are  
absorbed in the life they adore—  
In the life that endures no burden, and bows not the  
forehead, and bends not the knee—  
In the life everlasting of earth and of heaven, in the  
laws that atone and agree,  
In the measureless music of things, in the fervour of  
forces that rest or that roam,  
That cross and return and reissue, as I after you and  
as you after me  
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and  
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

For, albeit he were less than the least of them, haply  
the heart of a man may be bold  
To rejoice in the word of the sea as a mother's that  
saith to the son she bore,  
Child, was not the life in thee mine, and my spirit  
the breath in thy lips from of old?  
Have I let not thy weakness exult in my strength,  
and thy foolishness learn of my lore?  
Have I helped not or healed not thine anguish, or  
made not the might of thy gladness more?  
And surely his heart should answer, The light of the  
love of my life is in thee.  
She is fairer than earth, and the sun is not fairer,  
the wind is not blither than she:  
From my youth hath she shown me the joy of her  
bays that I crossed, of her cliffs that I clomb,

Till now that the twain of us here, in desire of the  
dawn and in trust of the sea,  
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and  
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Friend, earth is a harbour of refuge for winter, a  
covert whereunder to flee

When day is the vassal of night, and the strength of  
the hosts of her mightier than he ;

But here is the presence adored of me, here my desire  
is at rest and at home.

There are cliffs to be climbed upon land, there are  
ways to be trodden and ridden : but we

Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and  
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

## VIII

## THE SUNBOWS

SPRAY of song that springs in April, light of love that laughs through May,  
Live and die and live for ever : nought of all things far less fair  
Keeps a surer life than these that seem to pass like fire away.  
In the souls they live which are but all the brighter that they were ;  
In the hearts that kindle, thinking what delight of old was there.  
Wind that shapes and lifts and shifts them bids perpetual memory play  
Over dreams and in and out of deeds and thoughts which seem to wear  
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray.

Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink of dawn to-day :  
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling in rebound through radiant air,  
Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of wind that works in play,  
Working wonders more than heart may note or sight may wellnigh dare,

Wefts of rarer light than colours rain from heaven,  
though this be rare.

Arch on arch unbuilt in building, reared and ruined  
ray by ray,

Breaks and brightens, laughs and lessens, even till  
eyes may hardly bear

Light that leaps and runs and revels through the  
springing flames of spray.

Year on year sheds light and music rolled and flashed  
from bay to bay

Round the summer capes of time and winter head  
lands keen and bare

Whence the soul keeps watch, and bids her vassal  
memory watch and pray,

If perchance the dawn may quicken, or perchance the  
midnight spare.

Silence quells not music, darkness takes not sunlight  
in her snare ;

Shall not joys endure that perish ? Yea, saith dawn,  
though night say nay :

Life on life goes out, but very life enkindles every-  
where

Light that leaps and runs and revels through the  
springing flames of spray.

Friend, were life no more than this is, well would yet  
the living fare.

All aflower and all afire and all flung heavenward,  
who shall say

Such a flash of life were worthless ? This is worth  
a world of care—

Light that leaps and runs and revels through the  
springing flames of spray.

## IX

## ON THE VERGE

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's end. Where we stand, Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond these waves that gleam, We should know what never man hath known, nor eye of man hath scanned. Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like fume of shrines that steam Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our bounds of dream. Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the seas it watches roll Find their border fixed beyond them, and a world-wide shore's control : These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits : these are free. Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round the Pole, From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea.

Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes ; here on land Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews that plunge and scream.

Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive  
strand

Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and  
dies : and scarce they seem .

More than motes that thronged and trembled in the  
brief noon's breath and beam.

Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like  
sound of bells that toll,

Some with sighing and laughing, some with words  
that blessed and made us whole,

Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were,  
nor what were we.

Would we know, being mortal ? Never breath of  
answering whisper stole

From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in  
all the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness ? Ere our  
eyes and brows be fanned

Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from  
sleep's eternal stream,

Would we know sleep's guarded secret ? Ere the fire  
consume the brand,

Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken ? yet  
we deem

Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her  
starry team,

What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not :  
yea, the scroll

Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of  
peace or doom of dole.

Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the  
gloom with venturous glee,

Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbour, rock  
nor shoal,  
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in  
all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life  
have death for goal ?  
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor  
skies unroll  
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall  
alway be.  
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate  
on the soul  
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in  
all the sea.



## A NEW-YEAR ODE

To VICTOR HUGO



## I

Twice twelve times have the springs of years refilled  
 Their fountains from the river-head of time  
 Since by the green sea's marge, ere autumn chilled  
 Waters and woods with sense of changing clime,  
 A great light rose upon my soul, and thrilled  
 My spirit of sense with sense of spheres in chime,  
 Sound as of song wherewith a God would build  
 Towers that no force of conquering war might climb.  
 Wind shook the glimmering sea  
 Even as my soul in me  
 Was stirred with breath of mastery more sublime,  
 Uplift and borne along  
 More thunderous tides of song,  
 Where wave rang back to wave more rapturous  
 rhyme  
 And world on world flashed lordlier light  
 Than ever lit the wandering ways of ships by night.

## II

The spirit of God, whose breath of life is song,  
 Moved, though his word was human, on the face  
 Of those deep waters of the soul, too long  
 Dumb, dark, and cold, that waited for the grace  
 Wherewith day kindles heaven : and as some throng  
 Of quiring wings fills full some lone chill place  
 With sudden rush of life and joy, more strong  
 Than death or sorrow or all night's darkling race,

So was my heart, that heard  
 All heaven in each deep word,  
 Filled full with light of thought, and waxed apace  
 Itself more wide and deep,  
 To take that gift and keep  
 And cherish while my days fulfilled their space  
 A record wide as earth and sea,  
 The Legend writ of Ages past and yet to be.

## III

As high the chant of Paradise and Hell  
 Rose, when the soul of Milton gave it wings ;  
 As wide the sweep of Shakespeare's empire fell,  
 When life had bared for him her secret springs ;  
 But not his various soul might range and dwell  
 Amid the mysteries of the founts of things ;  
 Nor Milton's range of rule so far might swell  
 Across the kingdoms of forgotten kings.  
 Men, centuries, nations, time,  
 Life, death, love, trust, and crime,  
 Rang record through the change of smitten strings  
 That felt an exile's hand  
 Sound hope for every land  
 More loud than storm's cloud-sundering trumpet  
 rings,  
 And bid strong death for judgment rise,  
 And life bow down for judgment of his awless eyes

## IV

And death, soul-stricken in his strength, resigned  
 The keeping of the sepulchres to song ;  
 And life was humbled, and his height of mind  
 Brought lower than lies a grave-stone fallen along ;

And like a ghost and like a God mankind  
 Rose clad with light and darkness ; weak and  
 strong,  
 Clean and unclean, with eyes afire and blind,  
 Wounded and whole, fast bound with cord and  
 thong,  
 Free ; fair and foul, sin-stained,  
 And sinless ; crowned and chained ;  
 Fleet-limbed, and halting all his lifetime long ;  
 Glad of deep shame, and sad  
 For shame's sake ; wise, and mad ;  
 Girt round with love and hate of right and wrong ;  
 Armed and disarmed for sleep and strife ;  
 Proud, and sore fear made havoc of his pride of life.

## v

Shadows and shapes of fable and storied sooth  
 Rose glorious as with gleam of gold unpriced ;  
 Eve, clothed with heavenly nakedness and youth  
 That matched the morning's ; Cain, self-sacrificed  
 On crime's first altar : legends wise as truth,  
 And truth in legends deep embalmed and spiced ;  
 The stars that saw the starlike eyes of Ruth,  
 The grave that heard the clarion call of Christ.  
 And higher than sorrow and mirth  
 The heavenly song of earth  
 Sprang, in such notes as might have well sufficed  
 To still the storms of time  
 And sin's contentious clime  
 With peace renewed of life reparadised :  
 Earth, scarred not yet with temporal scars ;  
 Goddess of gods, our mother, chosen among the  
 stars.

## VI

Earth fair as heaven, ere change and time set odds  
Between them, light and darkness know not when,  
And fear, grown strong through panic periods,  
Crouched, a crowned worm, in faith's Lernean fen,  
And love lay bound, and hope was scourged with  
rods,  
And death cried out from desert and from den,  
Seeing all the heaven above him dark with gods  
And all the world about him marred of men.  
Cities that nought might purge  
Save the sea's whelming surge  
From all the pent pollutions in their pen  
Deep death drank down, and wrought,  
With wreck of all things, nought,  
That none might live of all their names again,  
Nor aught of all whose life is breath  
Serve any God whose likeness was not like to death.

## VII

Till by the lips and eyes of one live nation  
The blind mute world found grace to see and  
speak,  
And light watched rise a more divine creation  
At that more godlike utterance of the Greek,  
Let there be freedom. Kings whose orient station  
Made pale the morn, and all her presage bleak,  
Girt each with strengths of all his generation,  
Dim tribes of shamefaced soul and sun-swart cheek,  
Twice, urged with one desire,  
Son following hard on sire,  
With all the wrath of all a world to wreak,

And all the rage of night  
 Afire against the light  
 Whose weakness makes her strong-winged empire  
 weak,  
 Stood up to unsay that saying, and fell  
 Too far for song, though song were thousand-tongued,  
 to tell.

## VIII

From those deep echoes of the loud *Ægean*  
 That rolled response whereat false fear was chid  
 By songs of joy sublime and Sophoclean,  
 Fresh notes reverberate westward rose to bid  
 All wearier times take comfort from the pæan  
 That tells the night what deeds the sunrise did,  
 Even till the lawns and torrents Pyrenean  
 Ring answer from the records of the Cid.  
 But never force of fountains  
 From sunniest hearts of mountains  
 Wherein the soul of hidden June was hid  
 Poured forth so pure and strong  
 Springs of reiterate song,  
 Loud as the streams his fame was reared amid,  
 More sweet than flowers they feed, and fair  
 With grace of lordlier sunshine and more lambent  
 air.

## IX

A star more prosperous than the storm-clothed east's  
 Clothed all the warm south-west with light like  
 spring's,  
 When hands of strong men spread the wolves their  
 feasts  
 And from snake-spirited princes plucked the stings;

Ere earth, grown all one den of hurtling beasts,  
 Had for her sunshine and her watersprings  
 The fire of hell that warmed the hearts of priests,  
 The wells of blood that slaked the lips of kings.  
 The shadow of night made stone  
 Stood populous and alone,  
 Dense with its dead and loathed of living things  
 That draw not life from death,  
 And as with hell's own breath  
 And clangour of immitigable wings  
 Vexed the fair face of Paris, made  
 Foul in its murderous imminence of sound and shade.

## x

And all these things were parcels of the vision  
 That moved a cloud before his eyes, or stood  
 A tower half shattered by the strong collision  
 Of spirit and spirit, of evil gods with good ;  
 A ruinous wall rent through with grim division,  
 Where time had marked his every monstrous mood  
 Of scorn and strength and pride and self-derision :  
 The Tower of Things, that felt upon it brood  
 Night, and about it cast  
 The storm of all the past  
 Now mute and forceless as a fire subdued :  
 Yet through the rifted years  
 And centuries veiled with tears  
 And ages as with very death imbruad  
 Freedom, whence hope and faith grow strong,  
 Smiles, and firm love sustains the indissoluble song.

## XI

Above the cloudy coil of days deceased,  
 Its might of flight, with mists and storms beset,  
 Burns heavenward, as with heart and hope increased,  
 For all the change of tempests, all the fret  
 Of frost or fire, keen fraud or force released,  
 Wherewith the world once wasted knows not yet  
 If evil or good lit all the darkling east  
 From the ardent moon of sovereign Mahomet.  
 Sublime in work and will  
 The song sublimer still  
 Salutes him, ere the splendour shrink and set ;  
 Then with imperious eye  
 And wing that sounds the sky  
 Soars and sees risen as ghosts in concourse met  
 The old world's seven elder wonders, firm  
 As dust and fixed as shadows, weaker than the worm.

## XII

High witness borne of knights high-souled and hoary  
 Before death's face and empire's rings and glows  
 Even from the dust their life poured forth left gory,  
 As the eagle's cry rings after from the snows  
 Supreme rebuke of shame clothed round with glory  
 And hosts whose track the false crowned eagle  
 shows ;  
 More loud than sounds through stormiest song and  
 story  
 The laugh of slayers whose names the sea-wind  
 knows ;  
 More loud than peals on land  
 In many a red wet hand  
 The clash of gold and cymbals as they close ;

Loud as the blast that meets  
 The might of marshalled fleets  
 And sheds it into shipwreck, like a rose  
 Blown from a child's light grasp in sign  
 That earth's high lords are lords not over breeze and  
 brine.

## XIII

Above the dust and mire of man's dejection  
 The wide-winged spirit of song resurgent sees  
 His wingless and long-labouring resurrection  
 Up the arduous heaven, by sore and strange degrees,  
 Mount, and with splendour of the soul's reflection  
 Strike heaven's dark sovereign down upon his  
 knees,  
 Pale in the light of orient insurrection,  
 And dumb before the almighty lord's decrees  
 Who bade him be of yore,  
 Who bids him be no more :  
 And all earth's heart is quickened as the sea's,  
 Even as when sunrise burns  
 The very sea's heart yearns  
 That heard not on the midnight-walking breeze  
 The wail that woke with evensong  
 From hearts of poor folk watching all the darkness  
 long.

## XIV

Dawn and the beams of sunbright song illume  
 Love, with strange children at her piteous breast,  
 By grace of weakness from the grave-mouthed gloom  
 Plucked, and by mercy lulled to living rest,  
 Soft as the nursling's nigh the grandsire's tomb  
 That fell on sleep, a bird of rifled nest ;

Soft as the lips whose smile unsaid the doom  
 That gave their sire to violent death's arrest.  
     Even for such love's sake strong,  
     Wrath fires the inveterate song  
 That bids hell gape for one whose bland mouth  
 blest  
     All slayers and liars that sighed  
     Prayer as they slew and lied  
 Till blood had clothed his priesthood as a vest,  
     And hears, though darkness yet be dumb,  
 The silence of the trumpet of the wrath to come.

## xv

Nor lacked these lights of constellated age  
 A star among them fed with life more dire,  
 Lit with his bloodred fame, whose withering rage  
     Made earth for heaven's sake one funereal pyre  
 And life in faith's name one appointed stage  
     For death to purge the souls of men with fire.  
 Heaven, earth, and hell on one thrice tragic page  
     Mixed all their light and darkness : one man's lyre  
     Gave all their echoes voice ;  
     Bade rose-cheeked love rejoice,  
 And cold-lipped craft with ravenous fear conspire,  
     And fire-eyed faith smite hope  
     Dead, seeing enthroned as Pope  
 And crowned of heaven on earth at hell's desire  
     Sin, called by death's incestuous name  
 Borgia : the world that heard it flushed and quailed  
     with shame.

## XVI

Another year, and hope triumphant heard  
The consummating sound of song that spake  
Conclusion to the multitudinous word  
Whose expectation held her spirit awake  
Till full delight for twice twelve years deferred  
Bade all souls entering eat and drink, and take  
A third time comfort given them, that the third  
Might heap the measure up of twain, and make  
The sinking year sublime  
Among all sons of time  
And fair in all men's memories for his sake.  
Each thought of ours became  
Fire, kindling from his flame,  
And music widening in his wide song's wake.  
Yea, and the world bore witness here  
How great a light was risen upon this darkening year.

## XVII

It was the dawn of winter : sword in sheath,  
Change, veiled and mild, came down the gradual air  
With cold slow smiles that hid the doom beneath.  
Five days to die in yet were autumn's, ere  
The last leaf withered from his flowerless wreath.  
South, east, and north, our skies were all blown bare,  
But westward over glimmering holt and heath  
Cloud, wind, and light had made a heaven more  
fair  
Than ever dream or truth  
Showed earth in time's keen youth  
When men with angels communed unaware.

Above the sun's head, now  
 Veiled even to the ardent brow,  
 Rose two sheer wings of sundering cloud, that were  
 As a bird's poised for vehement flight,  
 Full-fledged with plumes of tawny fire and hoar grey  
 light.

## XVIII

As midnight black, as twilight brown, they spread,  
 But feathered thick with flame that streaked and  
 lined  
 Their living darkness, ominous else of dread,  
 From south to northmost verge of heaven inclined  
 Most like some giant angel's, whose bent head  
 Bowed earthward, as with message for mankind  
 Of doom or benediction to be shed  
 From passage of his presence. Far behind,  
 Even while they seemed to close,  
 Stoop, and take flight, arose  
 Above them, higher than heavenliest thought may  
 find  
 In light or night supreme  
 Of vision or of dream,  
 Immeasurable of men's eyes or mounting mind,  
 Heaven, manifest in manifold  
 Light of pure pallid amber, cheered with fire of gold.

## XIX

And where the fine gold faded all the sky  
 Shone green as the outer sea when April glows,  
 Inlaid with flakes and feathers fledged to fly  
 Of clouds suspense in rapture and repose,  
 With large live petals, broad as love bids lie  
 Full open when the sun salutes the rose,

And small rent sprays wherewith the heavens most high  
 Were strewn as autumn strews the garden-close  
     With ruinous roseleaves whirled  
     About their wan chill world,  
 Through wind-worn bowers that now no music  
     Knows,  
     Spoil of the dim dusk year  
     Whose utter night is near,  
 And near the flower of dawn beyond it blows ;  
     Till east and west were fire and light,  
 As though the dawn to come had flushed the coming  
     night.

## xx

The highways paced of men that toil or play,  
     The byways known of none but lonely feet,  
 Were paven of purple woven of night and day  
     With hands that met as hands of friends might  
     meet—  
 As though night's were not lifted up to slay  
     And day's had waxed not weaker. Peace more  
     sweet  
 Than music, light more soft than shadow, lay  
     On downs and moorlands wan with day's defeat,  
     That watched afar above  
     Life's very rose of love  
 Let all its lustrous leaves fall, fade, and fleet,  
     And fill all heaven and earth  
     Full as with fires of birth  
 Whence time should feed his years with light and  
     heat :  
     Nay, not life's, but a flower more strong  
 Than life or time or death, love's very rose of song.

## XXI

Song visible, whence all men's eyes were lit  
 With love and loving wonder : song that glowed  
 Through cloud and change on souls that knew not it  
 And hearts that wist not whence their comfort  
 flowed,  
 Whence fear was lightened of her fever-fit,  
 Whence anguish of her life-compelling load.  
 Yea, no man's head whereon the fire alit,  
 Of all that passed along that sunset road  
 Westward, no brow so drear,  
 No eye so dull of cheer,  
 No face so mean whereon that light abode,  
 But as with alien pride  
 Strange godhead glorified  
 Each feature flushed from heaven with fire that  
 showed  
 The likeness of its own life wrought  
 By strong transfiguration as of living thought.

## XXII

Nor only clouds of the everlasting sky,  
 Nor only men that paced that sunward way  
 To the utter bourne of evening, passed not by  
 Unblest or unillumined : none might say,  
 Of all things visible in the wide world's eye,  
 That all too low for all that grace it lay ;  
 The lowliest lakelets of the moorland nigh,  
 The narrowest pools where shallowest wavelets  
 play,  
 Were filled from heaven above  
 With light like fire of love,

With flames and colours like a dawn in May,  
 As hearts that lowlier live  
 With light of thoughts that give  
 Light from the depth of souls more deep than they  
 Through song's or story's kindling scroll,  
 The splendour of the shadow that reveals the soul.

## XXIII

For, when such light is in the world, we share,  
 All of us, all the rays thereof that shine :  
 Its presence is alive in the unseen air,  
 Its fire within our veins as quickening wine ;  
 A spirit is shed on all men everywhere,  
 Known or not known of all men for divine.  
 Yea, as the sun makes heaven, that light makes fair  
 All souls of ours, all lesser souls than thine,  
 Priest, prophet, seer and sage,  
 Lord of a subject age  
 That bears thy seal upon it for a sign ;  
 Whose name shall be thy name,  
 Whose light thy light of fame,  
 The light of love that makes thy soul a shrine  
 Whose record through all years to be  
 Shall bear this witness written—that its womb bare  
 thee.

## XXIV

O mystery, whence to one man's hand was given  
 Power upon all things of the spirit, and might  
 Whereby the veil of all the years was riven  
 And naked stood the secret soul of night !  
 O marvel, hailed of eyes whence cloud is driven,  
 That shows at last wrong reconciled with right

By death divine of evil and sin forgiven !  
 O light of song, whose fire is perfect light :  
     No speech, no voice, no thought,  
     No love, avails us aught  
 For service of thanksgiving in his sight  
     Who hath given us all for ever  
     Such gifts that man gave never  
 So many and great since first Time's wings took  
     flight.  
     Man may not praise a spirit above  
 Man's : life and death shall praise him : we can only  
     love.

## XXV

Life, everlasting while the worlds endure,  
 Death, self-abased before a power more high,  
 Shall bear one witness, and their word stand sure,  
     That not till time be dead shall this man die.  
 Love, like a bird, comes loyal to his lure ;  
     Fame flies before him, wingless else to fly.  
 A child's heart toward his kind is not more pure,  
     An eagle's toward the sun no lordlier eye.  
     Awe sweet as love and proud  
     As fame, though hushed and bowed,  
 Yearns toward him silent as his face goes by :  
     All crowns before his crown  
     Triumphantly bow down,  
 For pride that one more great than all draws nigh  
     All souls applaud, all hearts acclaim,  
 One heart benign, one soul supreme, one conquering  
     name.

## NOTES

ST.	v.
V.	3. La Légende des Siècles : Le Sacre de la Femme. 4. La Conscience. 7. Booz endormi. 8. Première rencontre du Christ avec le tombeau. 9. La Terre : Hymne.
VI.	3. Les Temps Paniques. 9. La Ville Disparue.
VII.	Les Trois Cents.
VIII.	1. Le Détroit de l'Europe : La Chanson de Sophocle à Salamine. 7. Le Romancero du Cid.
IX.	3. Le Petit Roi de Galice. 5. Le Jour des Rois. 9. Montfaucon.
X.	La vision d'où est sorti ce livre.
XI.	9. L'an neuf de l'Hégire. 12. Les sept merveilles du monde.
XII.	1. Les quatre jours d'Elciis. 4. Le Régiment du baron Madruce. 7. La Chanson des Aventuriers de la Mer. 9. Les Reîtres. 12. La Rose de l'Infante.
XIII.	1. Le Satyre. 12. Les paysans au bord de la mer.
XIV.	1. Les pauvres gens 5. Petit Paul. 7. Guerre Civile. 9. La Vision de Dante. 15. La Trompette du Jugement.
XV.	Torquemada (1882).
XVI.	La Légende des Siècles : tome cinquième et dernier (1883).
XVII.	November 25, 1883.

LINES ON THE MONUMENT OF  
GIUSEPPE MAZZINI.

ITALIA, mother of the souls of men,

Mother divine,

Of all that served thee best with sword or pen,  
All sons of thine,

Thou knowest that here the likeness of the best  
Before thee stands ;

The head most high, the heart found faithullest,  
The purest hands.

Above the fume and foam of time that flits,  
The soul, we know,

Now sits on high where Alighieri sits  
With Angelo.

Not his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech  
Enough to say

What this man was, whose praise no thought may  
reach,  
No words can weigh.

Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth  
Her first-born son,

Such grace befell not ever man on earth  
As crowns this one.

Of God nor man was ever this thing said,  
That he could give  
Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead  
Mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,  
With fast sealed eyes,  
And bade the dead rise up and live again,  
And she did rise.

And all the world was bright with her through  
him :  
But dark with strife,  
Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,  
Was all his life.

Life and the clouds are vanished : hate and fear  
Have had their span  
Of time to hurt, and are not : he is here,  
The sunlike man.

City superb that hadst Columbus first  
For sovereign son,  
Be prouder that thy breast hath later nurst  
This mightier one.

Glory be his for ever, while his land  
Lives and is free,  
As with controlling breath and sovereign hand  
He bade her be.

Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told  
That crown her fame,  
But highest of all that heaven and earth behold  
Mazzini's name.

## LES CASQUETS.

FROM the depths of the waters that lighten and darken  
 With change everlasting of life and of death,  
 Where hardly by noon if the lulled ear hearken  
 It hears the sea's as a tired child's breath,  
 Where hardly by night if an eye dare scan it  
 The storm lets shipwreck be seen or heard,  
 As the reefs to the waves and the foam to the granite  
 Respond one merciless word,

Sheer seen and far, in the sea's live heaven,  
 A seamew's flight from the wild sweet land,  
 White-plumed with foam if the wind wake, seven  
 Black helms as of warriors that stir not stand.  
 From the depths that abide and the waves that environ  
 Seven rocks rear heads that the midnight masks ;  
 And the strokes of the swords of the storm are as iron  
 On the steel of the wave-worn casques.

Be night's dark word as the word of a wizard,  
 Be the word of dawn as a god's glad word,  
 Like heads of the spirits of darkness visored  
 That see not for ever, nor ever have heard,  
 These basnets, plumed as for fight or plumeless,  
 Crowned of the storm and by storm discrowned,  
 Keep ward of the lists where the dead lie tombless  
 And the tale of them is not found.

Nor eye may number nor hand may reckon  
 The tithes that are taken of life by the dark,  
 Or the ways of the path, if doom's hand beckon,  
 For the soul to fare as a helmless bark—  
 Fare forth on a way that no sign showeth,  
 Nor aught of its goal or of aught between  
 A path for her flight which no fowl knoweth,  
 Which the vulture's eye hath not seen.

Here still, though the wave and the wind seem  
 lovers  
 Lulled half asleep by their own soft words,  
 A dream as of death in the sun's light hovers,  
 And a sign in the motions and cries of the birds.  
 Dark auguries and keen from the sweet sea-swallows  
 Strike noon with a sense as of midnight's breath,  
 And the wing that flees and the wing that follows  
 Are as types of the wings of death.

For here, when the night roars round, and under  
 The white sea lightens and leaps like fire,  
 Acclaimed of storm and applauded in thunder,  
 Sits death on the throne of his crowned desire.  
 Yea, hardly the hand of the god might fashion  
 A seat more strong for his strength to take,  
 For the might of his heart and the pride of his  
 passion  
 To rejoice in the wars they make.

When the heart in him brightens with blitheness of  
 battle  
 And the depth of its thirst is fulfilled with strife,  
 And his ear with the ravage of bolts that rattle,  
 And the soul of death with the pride of life,

Till the darkness is loud with his dark thanksgiving  
And wind and cloud are as chords of his hymn,  
There is nought save death in the deep night living,  
And the whole night worships him.

Heaven's height bows down to him, signed with his token,  
And the sea's depth, moved as a heart that yearns,  
Heaves up to him, strong as a heart half broken,  
A heart that breaks in a prayer that burns.  
Of cloud is the shrine of his worship moulded,  
But the altar therein is of sea-shaped stone,  
Whereon, with the strength of his wide wings folded,  
Sits death in the dark, alone.

He hears the word of his servant spoken,  
The word that the wind his servant saith ;  
Storm writes on the front of the night his token,  
That the skies may seem to bow down to death.  
But the clouds that stoop and the storms that minister  
Serve but as thralls that fulfil their tasks ;  
And his seal is not set save here on the sinister  
Crests reared of the crownless casques.

Nor flame nor plume of the storm that crowned them  
Gilds or quickens their stark black strength.  
Life lightens and murmurs and laughs right round  
them,  
At peace with the noon's whole breadth and length,  
At one with the heart of the soft-souled heaven,  
At one with the life of the kind wild land :  
But its touch may unbrace not the strengths of the seven  
Casques hewn of the storm-wind's hand.

No touch may loosen the black braced helmlets  
 For the wild elves' heads of the wild waves  
 wrought.  
 As flowers on the sea are her small green realmlets,  
 Like heavens made out of a child's heart's thought ;  
 But these as thorns of her desolate places,  
 Strong fangs that fasten and hold lives fast :  
 And the vizors are framed as for formless faces  
 That a dark dream sees go past.

Of fear and of fate are the frontlets fashioned,  
 And the heads behind them are dire and dumb.  
 When the heart of the darkness is scarce impassioned,  
 Thrilled scarce with sense of the wrath to come,  
 They bear the sign from of old engraven,  
 Though peace be round them and strife seem far,  
 That here is none but the night-wind's haven,  
 With death for the harbour bar.

Of the iron of doom are the casquets carven,  
 That never the rivets thereof should burst.  
 When the heart of the darkness is hunger-starven,  
 And the throats of the gulfs are agape for thirst,  
 And stars are as flowers that the wind bids wither,  
 And dawn is as hope struck dead by fear,  
 The rage of the ravenous night sets hither,  
 And the crown of her work is here.

All shores about and afar lie lonely,  
 But lonelier are these than the heart of grief,  
 These loose-linked rivets of rock, whence only  
 Strange life scarce gleams from the sheer main reef,

With a blind wan face in the wild wan morning,  
With a live lit flame on its brows by night,  
That the lost may lose not its word's mute warning  
And the blind by its grace have sight.

Here, walled in with the wide waste water,  
Grew the grace of a girl's lone life,  
The sea's and the sea-wind's foster-daughter,  
And peace was hers in the main mid strife.  
For her were the rocks clothed round with thunder,  
And the crests of them carved by the storm-smith's  
craft :  
For her was the mid storm rent in sunder  
As with passion that wailed and laughed.

For her the sunrise kindled and scattered  
The red rose-leaflets of countless cloud :  
For her the blasts of the springtide shattered  
The strengths reluctant of waves back-bowed.  
For her would winds in the mid sky levy  
Bright wars that hardly the night bade cease :  
At noon, when sleep on the sea lies heavy,  
For her would the sun make peace.

Peace rose crowned with the dawn on golden  
Lit leagues of triumph that flamed and smiled :  
Peace lay lulled in the moon-beholden  
Warm darkness making the world's heart mild  
For all the wide waves' troubles and treasons,  
One word only her soul's ear heard  
Speak from stormless and storm-rent seasons,  
And nought save peace was the word.

All her life waxed large with the light of it,  
All her heart fed full on the sound :  
Spirit and sense were exalted in sight of it,  
Compassed and girdled and clothed with it round  
Sense was none but a strong still rapture,  
Spirit was none but a joy sublime,  
Of strength to curb and of craft to capture  
The craft and the strength of Time.

Time lay bound as in painless prison  
There, closed in with a strait small space.  
Never thereon as a strange light risen  
Change had unveiled for her grief's far face.  
Three white walls flung out from the basement  
Girt the width of the world whereon  
Gazing at night from her flame-lit casement  
She saw where the dark sea shone.

Hardly the breadth of a few brief paces,  
Hardly the length of a strong man's stride,  
The small court flower-lit with children's faces  
Scarce held scope for a bird to hide.  
Yet here was a man's brood reared and hidden  
Between the rocks and the towers and the foam,  
Where peril and pity and peace were bidden  
As guests to the same sure home.

Here would pity keep watch for peril,  
And surely comfort his heart with peace.  
No flower save one, where the reefs lie sterile,  
Gave of the seed of its heart's increase.

Pity and surety and peace most lowly  
Were the root and the stem and the bloom of the  
flower :  
And the light and the breath of the buds kept holy  
That maid's else blossomless bower.

With never a leaf but the seaweed's tangle,  
Never a bird's but the seamew's note,  
It heard all round it the strong storms wrangle,  
Watched far past it the waste wrecks float.  
But her soul was stilled by the sky's endurance,  
And her heart made glad with the sea's content ;  
And he faith waxed more in the sun's assurance  
For the winds that came and went.

Sweetness was brought for her forth of the bitter  
Sea's strength, and light of the deep sea's dark,  
From where green lawns on Alderney glitter  
To the bastioned crags of the steeps of Sark.  
These she knew from afar beholden,  
And marvelled haply what life would be  
On moors that sunset and dawn leave golden,  
In dells that smile on the sea.

And forth she fared as a stout-souled rover,  
For a brief blithe raid on the bounding brine :  
And light winds ferried her light bark over  
To the lone soft island of fair-limbed kine.  
But the league-long length of its wild green border,  
And the small bright streets of serene St. Anne,  
Perplexed her sense with a strange disorder  
At sight of the works of man.

The world was here, and the world's confusion,  
And the dust of the wheels of revolving life,  
Pain, labour, change, and the fierce illusion  
Of strife more vain than the sea's old strife.  
And her heart within her was vexed, and dizzy  
The sense of her soul as a wheel that whirled :  
She might not endure for a space that busy  
Loud coil of the troubulous world.

Too full, she said, was the world of trouble,  
Too dense with noise of contentious things,  
And shows less bright than the blithe foam's bubble  
As home she fared on the smooth wind's wings.  
For joy grows loftier in air more lonely,  
Where only the sea's brood fain would be ;  
Where only the heart may receive in it only  
The love of the heart of the sea.

## A BALLAD OF SARK.

HIGH beyond the granite portal arched across  
 Like the gateway of some godlike giant's hold  
 Sweep and swell the billowy breasts of moor and moss  
 East and westward, and the dell their slopes ensold  
 Basks in purple, glows in green, exults in gold.  
 Glens that know the dove and fells that hear the lark  
 Fill with joy the rapturous island, as an ark  
 Full of spicery wrought from herb and flower and  
 tree.  
 None would dream that grief even here may disembark  
 On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Rocks emblazoned like the mid shield's royal boss  
 Take the sun with all their blossom broad and  
 bold.  
 None would dream that all this moorland's glow and  
 gloss  
 Could be dark as tombs that strike the spirit acold  
 Even in eyes that opened here, and here behold  
 Now no sun relume from hope's belated spark  
 Any comfort, nor may ears of mourners hark  
 Though the ripe woods ring with golden-throated  
 glee,  
 While the soul lies shattered, like a stranded bark  
 On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Death and doom are they whose crested triumphs  
toss

On the proud plumed waves whence mourning  
notes are tolled.

Wail of perfect woe and moan for utter loss

Raise the bride-song through the graveyard on the  
wold

Where the bride-bed keeps the bridegroom fast in  
mould,

Where the bride, with death for priest and doom for  
clerk,

Hears for choir the throats of waves like wolves that  
bark,

Sore anhungered, off the drear Eperquerie.

Fain to spoil the strongholds of the strength of Sark  
On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

Prince of storm and tempest, lord whose ways are  
dark,

Wind whose wings are spread for flight that none  
may mark,

Lightly dies the joy that lives by grace of thee.

Love through thee lies bleeding, hope lies cold and  
stark,

On the wrathful woful marge of earth and sea.

## NINE YEARS OLD

FEBRUARY 4, 1883

## I

LORD of light, whose shrine no hands destroy,  
 God of song, whose hymn no tongue refuses,  
 Now, though spring far hence be cold and coy,  
 Bid the golden mouths of all the Muses  
 Ring forth gold of strains without alloy,  
 Till the ninefold rapture that suffuses  
 Heaven with song bid earth exult for joy,  
 Since the child whose head this dawn bedews is  
 Sweet as once thy violet-cradled boy.

## II

Even as he lay lapped about with flowers,  
 Lies the life now nine years old before us  
 Lapped about with love in all its hours ;  
 Hailed of many loves that chant in chorus  
 Loud or low from lush or leafless bowers,  
 Some from hearts exultant born sonorous,  
 Some scarce louder-voiced than soft-tongued  
 showers  
 Two months hence, when spring's light wings  
 poised o'er us  
 High shall hover, and her heart be ours.

## III

Even as he, though man-forsaken, smiled  
 On the soft kind snakes divinely bidden  
 There to feed him in the green mid wild  
 Full with hurtless honey, till the hidden  
 Birth should prosper, finding fate more mild,  
 So full-fed with pleasures unforbidden,  
 So by love's lures blamelessly beguiled,  
 Laughs the nursling of our hearts unchidden  
 Yet by change that mars not yet the child.

## IV

Ah, not yet ! Thou, lord of night and day,  
 Time, sweet father of such blameless pleasure,  
 Time, false friend who tak'st thy gifts away,  
 Spare us yet some scantlings of the treasure,  
 Leave us yet some rapture of delay,  
 Yet some bliss of blind and fearless leisure  
 Unprophetic of delight's decay,  
 Yet some nights and days wherein to measure  
 All the joys that bless us while they may.

## V

Not the waste Arcadian woodland, wet  
 Still with dawn and vocal with Alpheus,  
 Reared a nursling worthier love's regret,  
 Lord, than this, whose eyes beholden free us  
 Straight from bonds the soul would fain forget,  
 Fain cast off, that night and day might see us  
 Clear once more of life's vain fume and fret :  
 Leave us, then, whate'er thy doom decree us,  
 Yet some days wherein to love him yet.

## VI

Yet some days wherein the child is ours,  
 Ours, not thine, O lord whose hand is o'er us  
 Always, as the sky with suns and showers  
 Dense and radiant, soundless or sonorous ;  
 Yet some days for love's sake, ere the bowers  
 Fade wherein his fair first years kept chorus  
 Night and day with Graces robed like hours,  
 Ere this worshipped childhood wane before us,  
 Change, and bring forth fruit—but no more flowers.

## VII

Love we may the thing that is to be,  
 Love we must : but how forego this olden  
 Joy, this flower of childish love, that we  
 Held more dear than aught of Time is holden—  
 Time, whose laugh is like as Death's to see—  
 Time, who heeds not aught of all behoden,  
 Heard, or touched in passing—flower or tree,  
 Tares or grain of leaden days or golden—  
 More than wind has heed of ships at sea ?

## VIII

First the babe, a very rose of joy,  
 Sweet as hope's first note of jubilation,  
 Passes : then must growth and change destroy  
 Next the child, and mar the consecration  
 Hallowing yet, ere thought or sense annoy,  
 Childhood's yet half heavenlike habitation,  
 Bright as truth and frailer than a toy ;  
 Whence its guest with eager gratulation  
 Springs, and life grows larger round the boy.

## IX

Yet, ere sunrise wholly cease to shine,  
Ere change come to chide our hearts, and scatter  
Memories marked for love's sake with a sign,  
Let the light of dawn beholden flatter  
Yet some while our eyes that feed on thine,  
Child, with love that change nor time can shatter,  
Love, whose silent song says more than mine  
Now, though charged with elder loves and latter  
Here it hails a lord whose years are nine.

## AFTER A READING

FOR the seven times seventh time love would renew  
 the delight without end or alloy  
 That it takes in the praise as it takes in the presence  
 of eyes that fulfil it with joy ;  
 But how shall it praise them and rest unrebuked by  
 the presence and pride of the boy ?

Praise meet for a child is unmeet for an elder whose  
 winters and springs are nine :  
 What song may have strength in its wings to expand  
 them, or light in its eyes to shine,  
 That shall seem not as weakness and darkness if  
 matched with the theme I would fain make mine ?

The round little flower of a face that exults in the  
 sunshine of shadowless days  
 Defies the delight it enkindles to sing of it aught not  
 unfit for the praise  
 Of the sweetest of all things that eyes may rejoice in  
 and tremble with love as they gaze.

Such tricks and such meanings abound on the lips  
 and the brows that are brighter than light,  
 The demure little chin, the sedate little nose, and the  
 forehead of sun-stained white,  
 That love overflows into laughter and laughter sub-  
 sides into love at the sight.

Each limb and each feature has action in tune with  
the meaning that smiles as it speaks  
From the fervour of eyes and the fluttering of hands  
in a foretaste of fancies and freaks,  
When the thought of them deepens the dimples that  
laugh in the corners and curves of his cheeks.

As a bird when the music within her is yet too intense  
to be spoken in song,  
That pauses a little for pleasure to feel how the notes  
from withinwards throng,  
So pauses the laugh at his lips for a little, and waxes  
within more strong.

As the music elate and triumphal that bids all things  
of the dawn bear part  
With the tune that prevails when her passion has  
risen into rapture of passionate art,  
So lightens the laughter made perfect that leaps from  
its nest in the heaven of his heart.

Deep, grave and sedate is the gaze of expectant  
intensity bent for awhile  
And absorbed on its aim as the tale that entralls him  
uncovers the weft of its wile,  
Till the goal of attention is touched, and expectancy  
kisses delight in a smile.

And it seems to us here that in Paradise hardly the  
spirit of Lamb or of Blake  
May hear or behold aught sweeter than lightens and  
rings when his bright thoughts break  
In laughter that well might lure them to look, and to  
smile as of old for his sake.

O singers that best loved children, and best for their  
sakes are beloved of us here,  
In the world of your life everlasting, where love has  
no thorn and desire has no fear,  
All else may be sweeter than aught is on earth,  
nought dearer than these are dear.

## MAYTIME IN MIDWINTER

A NEW year gleams on us, tearful  
 And troubled and smiling dim  
 As the smile on a lip still fearful,  
 As glances of eyes that swim :  
 But the bird of my heart makes cheerful  
 The days that are bright for him.

Child, how may a man's love merit  
 The grace you shed as you stand,  
 The gift that is yours to inherit ?  
 Through you are the bleak days bland ;  
 Your voice is a light to my spirit ;  
 You bring the sun in your hand.

The year's wing shows not a feather  
 As yet of the plumes to be ;  
 Yet here in the shrill grey weather  
 The spring's self stands at my knee,  
 And laughs as we commune together,  
 And lightens the world we see.

The rains are as dews for the christening  
 Of dawns that the nights benumb :  
 The spring's voice answers me listening  
 For speech of a child to come,  
 While promise of music is glistening  
 On lips that delight keeps dumb.

The mists and the storms receding  
At sight of you smile and die :  
Your eyes held wide on me reading  
Shed summer across the sky :  
Your heart shines clear for me, heeding  
No more of the world than I.

The world, what is it to you, dear,  
And me, if its face be grey,  
And the new-born year be a shrewd year  
For flowers that the fierce winds fray ?  
You smile, and the sky seems blue, dear ;  
You laugh, and the month turns May.

Love cares not for care, he has daffed her  
Aside as a mate for guile :  
The sight that my soul yearns after  
Feeds full my sense for awhile ;  
Your sweet little sun-faced laughter,  
Your good little glad grave smile.

Your hands through the bookshelves flutter ;  
Scott, Shakespeare, Dickens, are caught ;  
Blake's visions, that lighten and mutter ;  
Molière—and his smile has nought  
Left on it of sorrow, to utter  
The secret things of his thought.

No grim thing written or graven  
But grows, if you gaze on it, bright ;  
A lark's note rings from the raven,  
And tragedy's robe turns white ;  
And shipwrecks drift into haven ;  
And darkness laughs, and is light.

Grief seems but a vision of madness ;  
Life's key-note peals from above  
With nought in it more of sadness  
Than broods on the heart of a dove :  
At sight of you, thought grows gladness,  
And life, through love of you, love.

## A DOUBLE BALLAD OF AUGUST

(1884)

ALL Afric, winged with death and fire,  
 Pants in our pleasant English air.  
 Each blade of grass is tense as wire,  
 And all the wood's loose trembling hair  
 Stark in the broad and breathless glare  
 Of hours whose touch wastes herb and tree.  
 This bright sharp death shines everywhere ;  
 Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Earth seems a corpse upon the pyre ;  
 The sun, a scourge for slaves to bear.  
 All power to fear, all keen desire,  
 Lies dead as dreams of days that were  
 Before the new-born world lay bare  
 In heaven's wide eye, whereunder we  
 Lie breathless till the season spare :  
 Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Fierce hours, with ravening fangs that tire  
 On spirit and sense, divide and share  
 The throbs of thoughts that scarce respire,  
 The throes of dreams that scarce forbear

One mute immitigable prayer  
For cold perpetual sleep to be  
Shed snowlike on the sense of care.  
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The dust of ways where men suspire  
Seems even the dust of death's dim lair.  
But though the feverish days be dire  
The sea-wind rears and cheers its fair  
Blithe broods of babes that here and there  
Make the sands laugh and glow for glee  
With gladder flowers than gardens wear.  
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The music dies not off the lyre  
That lets no soul alive despair.  
Sleep strikes not dumb the breathless choir  
Of waves whose note bids sorrow spare.  
As glad they sound, as fast they fare,  
As when fate's word first set them free  
And gave them light and night to wear.  
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

For there, though night and day conspire  
To compass round with toil and snare  
And changeless whirl of change, whose gyre  
Draws all things deathwards unaware,  
The spirit of life they scourge and scare,  
Wild waves that follow on waves that flee  
Laugh, knowing that yet, though earth despair,  
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

## HEARTSEASE COUNTRY

TO ISABEL SWINBURNE

THE far green westward heavens are bland,  
 The far green Wiltshire downs are clear  
 As these deep meadows hard at hand :  
 The sight knows hardly far from near,  
 Nor morning joy from evening cheer.  
 In cottage garden-plots their bees  
 Find many a fervent flower to seize  
 And strain and drain the heart away  
 From ripe sweet-williams and sweet-peas  
 At every turn on every way.

But gladliest seems one flower to expand  
 Its whole sweet heart all round us here ;  
 'Tis Heartsease Country, Pansy Land.  
 Nor sounds nor savours harsh and drear  
 Where engines yell and halt and veer  
 Can vex the sense of him who sees  
 One flower-plot midway, that for trees  
 Has poles, and sheds all grimed or grey  
 For bowers like those that take the breeze  
 At every turn on every way.

Content even there they smile and stand,  
Sweet thought's heart-easing flowers, nor fear,  
With reek and roaring steam though fanned,  
Nor shrink nor perish as they peer.  
The heart's eye holds not those more dear  
That glow between the lanes and leas  
Where'er the homeliest hand may please  
To bid them blossom as they may  
Where light approves and wind agrees  
At every turn on every way.

Sister, the word of winds and seas  
Endures not as the word of these  
Your wayside flowers whose breath would say  
How hearts that love may find heart's ease  
At every turn on every way.

## A BALLAD OF APPEAL

TO CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

SONG wakes with every wakening year  
 From hearts of birds that only feel  
 Brief spring's deciduous flower-time near :  
 And song more strong to help or heal  
 Shall silence worse than winter seal ?  
 From love-lit thought's remurmuring cave  
 The notes that rippled, wave on wave,  
 Were clear as love, as faith were strong ;  
 And all souls blessed the soul that gave  
 Sweet water from the well of song.

All hearts bore fruit of joy to hear,  
 All eyes felt mist upon them steal  
 For joy's sake, trembling toward a tear,  
 When, loud as marriage-bells that peal,  
 Or flutelike soft, or keen like steel,  
 Sprang the sheer music ; sharp or grave,  
 We heard the drift of winds that drove,  
 And saw, swept round by ghosts in throng,  
 Dark rocks, that yielded, where they clave,  
 Sweet water from the well of song.

Blithe verse made all the dim sense clear  
That smiles of babbling babes conceal :  
Prayer's perfect heart spake here : and here  
Rose notes of blameless woe and weal,  
More soft than this poor song's appeal.  
Where orchards bask, where cornfields wave,  
They dropped like rains that cleanse and lave,  
And scattered all the year along,  
Like dewfall on an April grave,  
Sweet water from the well of song.

Ballad, go bear our prayer, and crave  
Pardon, because thy lowlier stave  
Can do this plea no right, but wrong.  
Ask nought beside thy pardon, save  
Sweet water from the well of song.

## CRADLE SONGS

(TO A TUNE OF BLAKE'S)

## I

BABY, baby bright,  
 Sleep can steal from sight  
 Little of your light :

Soft as fire in dew,  
 Still the life in you  
 Lights your slumber through

Four white eyelids keep  
 Fast the seal of sleep  
 Deep as love is deep :

Yet, though closed it lies,  
 Love behind them spies  
 Heaven in two blue eyes.

## II

Baby, baby dear,  
 Earth and heaven are near  
 Now, for heaven is here. '

Heaven is every place  
Where your flower-sweet face  
Fills our eyes with grace.

Till your own eyes deign  
Earth a glance again,  
Earth and heaven are twain.

Now your sleep is done,  
Shine, and show the sun  
Earth and heaven are one.

## III

Baby, baby sweet,  
Love's own lips are meet  
Scarce to kiss your feet.

Hardly love's own ear,  
When your laugh crows clear,  
Quite deserves to hear.

Hardly love's own wile,  
Though it please awhile,  
Quite deserves your smile.

Baby full of grace,  
Bless us yet a space :  
Sleep will come apace.

## IV

Baby, baby true,  
Man, whate'er he do,  
May deceive not you.

Smiles whose love is guile,  
Worn a flattering while,  
Win from you no smile.

One, the smile alone  
Out of love's heart grown,  
Ever wins your own.

Man, a dunce uncouth,  
Errs in age and youth :  
Babies know the truth.

## V

Baby, baby fair,  
Love is fain to dare  
Bless your haughtiest air.

Baby blithe and bland,  
Reach but forth a hand  
None may dare withstand ;

Love, though wellnigh cowed,  
Yet would praise aloud  
Pride so sweetly proud.

No ! the fitting word  
Even from breeze or bird  
Never yet was heard.

## VI

Baby, baby kind,  
Though no word we find,  
Bear us yet in mind.

## CRADLE SONGS

Half a little hour,  
Baby bright in bower,  
Keep this thought aflower—

Love it is, I see,  
Here with heart and knee  
Bows and worships me.

What can baby do,  
Then, for love so true?—  
Let it worship you.

## VII

Baby, baby wise,  
Love's divine surmise  
Lights your constant eyes.

Day and night and day  
One mute word would they,  
As the soul saith, say.

Trouble comes and goes ;  
Wonder ebbs and flows ;  
Love remains and glows.

As the fledgeling dove  
Feels the breast above,  
So your heart feels love.

## PELAGIUS

## I

THE sea shall praise him and the shores bear part  
 That reared him when the bright south world was  
 black  
 With fume of creeds more foul than hell's own  
 rack,  
 Still darkening more love's face with loveless art  
 Since Paul, faith's fervent Antichrist, of heart  
 Heroic, haled the world vehemently back  
 From Christ's pure path on dire Jehovah's track,  
 And said to dark Elisha's Lord, "Thou art."  
 But one whose soul had put the raiment on  
 Of love that Jesus left with James and John  
 Withstood that Lord whose seals of love were  
 lies,  
 Seeing what we see—how, touched by Truth's bright  
 rod,  
 The fiend whom Jews and Africans called God  
 Feels his own hell take hold on him, and dies.

## II

The world has no such flower in any land,  
 And no such pearl in any gulf the sea,  
 As any babe on any mother's knee.  
 But all things blessed of men by saints are banned :

God gives them grace to read and understand  
 The palimpsest of evil, writ where we,  
 'Poor fools and lovers but of love, can see  
 Nought save a blessing signed by Love's own hand.  
 The smile that opens heaven on us for them  
 Hath sin's transmitted birthmark hid therein :  
 The kiss it craves calls down from heaven a rod.  
 It iuincence be sin that Gods condemn,  
 Praise we the men who so being born in sin  
 First dared the doom and broke the bonds of  
 God.

## III

Man's heel is on the Almighty's neck who said,  
 Let there be hell, and there was hell—on earth.  
 But not for that may men forget their worth—  
 Nay, but much more remember them—who led  
 The living first from dwellings of the dead,  
 And rent the cerecloths that were wont to engirth  
 Souls wrapped and swathed and swaddled from  
 their birth  
 With lies that bound them fast from heel to head.  
 Among the tombs when wise men all their lives  
 Dwelt, and cried out, and cut themselves with  
 knives,  
 These men, being foolish, and of saints abhorred  
 Beheld in heaven the sun by saints reviled,  
 Love, and on earth one everlasting Lord  
 In every likeness of a little child.

## LOUIS BLANC

## THREE SONNETS TO HIS MEMORY

## I

THE stainless soul that smiled through glorious eyes ;  
 The bright grave brow whereon dark fortune's  
 blast

Might blow, but might not bend it, nor o'ercast,  
 Save for one fierce fleet hour of shame, the skies  
 Thrilled with warm dreams of worthier days to rise

And end the whole world's winter ; here at last,  
 If death be death, have passed into the past ;  
 If death be life, live, though their semblance dies.  
 Hope and high faith inviolate of distrust

Shone strong as life inviolate of the grave  
 Through each bright word and lineament serene.  
 Most loving righteousness and love most just  
 Crowned, as day crowns the dawn-enkindled wave,  
 With visible aureole thine unfaltering mien.

## II

Strong time and fire-swift change, with lightnings  
 clad

And shod with thunders of reverberate years,  
 Have filled with light and sound of hopes and fears  
 The space of many a season, since I had

Grace of good hap to make my spirit glad,  
Once communing with thine : and memory hears  
The bright voice yet that then rejoiced mine ears,  
Sees yet the light of eyes that spake, and bade  
Fear not, but hope, though then time's heart were  
weak  
And heaven by hell shade-stricken, and the range  
Of high-born hope made questionable and strange  
As twilight trembling till the sunlight speak.  
Thou sawest the sunrise and the storm in one  
Break : seest thou now the storm-compelling sun ?

## III

Surely thou seest, O spirit of light and fire,  
Surely thou canst not choose, O soul, but see  
The days whose dayspring was beheld of thee  
Ere eyes less pure might have their hope's desire,  
Beholding life in heaven again respire  
Where men saw nought that was or was to be,  
Save only death imperial. Thou and he  
Who has the heart of all men's hearts for lyre,  
Ye twain, being great of spirit as time is great,  
And sure of sight as truth's own heavenward eye,  
Beheld the forms of forces passing by  
And certitude of equal-balanced fate,  
Whose breath forefelt makes darkness palpitate,  
And knew that light should live and darkness die.

## VOS DEOS LAUDAMUS :

## THE CONSERVATIVE JOURNALIST'S ANTHEM

"As a matter of fact, no man living, or who ever lived—not CÆSAR or PERICLES, not SHAKESPEARE or MICHAEL ANGELO—could confer honour more than he took on entering the House of Lords."—*Saturday Review*, December 15, 1883.

"Clumsy and shallow snobbery—can do no hurt."—*Ibid.*

## I

O LORDS our Gods, beneficent, sublime,  
 In the evening, and before the morning flames,  
 We praise, we bless, we magnify your names.  
 The slave is he that serves not ; his the crime  
 And shame, who hails not as the crown of Time  
 That House wherein the all-envious world acclaims  
 Such glory that the reflex of it shames  
 All crowns bestowed of men for prose or rhyme.  
 The serf, the cur, the sycophant is he  
 Who feels no cringing motion twitch his knee  
 When from a height too high for Shakespeare nods  
 The wearer of a higher than Milton's crown.  
 Stoop, Chaucer, stoop : Keats, Shelley, Burns, bow  
 down :  
 These have no part with you, O Lords our Gods.

## II

O Lords our Gods, it is not that ye sit  
 Serene above the thunder, and exempt  
 From strife of tongues and casualties that tempt  
 Men merely found by proof of manhood fit  
 For service of their fellows : this is it  
 Which sets you past the reach of Time's attempt.  
 Which gives us right of justified contempt  
 For commonwealths built up by mere men's wit :  
 That gold unlocks not, nor may flatteries ope,  
 The portals of your heaven ; that none may hope  
 With you to watch how life beneath you plods,  
 Save for high service given, high duty done ;  
 That never was your rank ignobly won :  
 For this we give you praise, O Lords our Gods.

## III

O Lords our Gods, the times are evil : you  
 Redeem the time, because of evil days.  
 While abject souls in servitude of praise  
 Bow down to heads untitled, and the crew  
 Whose honour dwells but in the deeds they do,  
 From loftier hearts your nobler servants raise  
 More manful salutation : yours are bays  
 That not the dawn's plebeian pearls bedew ;  
 Yours, laurels plucked not of such hands as wove  
 Old age its chaplet in Colonos' grove.  
 Our time, with heaven and with itself at odds,  
 Makes all lands else as seas that seethe and boil ;  
 But yours are yet the corn and wine and oil,  
 And yours our worship yet, O Lords our Gods.

## ON THE BICENTENARY OF CORNEILLE

CELEBRATED UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF  
VICTOR HUGO

SCARCE two hundred years are gone, and the world  
is past away

As a noise of brawling wind, as a flash of breaking  
foam,

That beheld the singer born who raised up the  
dead of Rome ;

And a mightier now than he bids him too rise up  
to-day.

All the dim great age is dust, and its king is tombless  
clay,

But its loftier laurel green as in living eyes it  
clomb,

And his memory whom it crowned hath his people's  
heart for home,

And the shade across it falls of a lordlier-flowering  
bay.

Stately shapes about the tomb of their mighty maker  
pace,

Heads of high-plumed Spaniards shine, souls revive  
of Roman race,

Sound of arms and words of wail through the glowing  
darkness rise,  
Speech of hearts heroic rings forth of lips that know  
not breath,  
And the light of thoughts august fills the pride of  
kindling eyes  
Whence of yore the spell of song drove the shadow  
of darkling death.

## IN SEPULCRETIS

“Vidistis ipso rapere de rogo cœnam.”—CATULLUS, LIX. 3.

“To publish even one line of an author which he himself has not intended for the public at large—especially letters which are addressed to private persons—is to commit a despicable act of felony.”—HEINE.

## I

IT is not then enough that men who give  
 The best gifts given of man to man should feel,  
 Alive, a snake's head ever at their heel :  
 Small hurt the worms may do them while they live—  
 Such hurt as scorn for scorn's sake may forgive.  
 But now, when death and fame have set one seal  
 On tombs whereat Love, Grief, and Glory kneel,  
 Men sift all secrets, in their critic sieve,  
 Of graves wherein the dust of death might shrink  
 · To know what tongues defile the dead man's name  
 With loathsome love, and praise that stings like  
 shame.  
 Rest once was theirs, who had crossed the mortal  
 brink :  
 No rest, no reverence now : dull fools undress  
 Death's holiest shrine, life's veriest nakedness.

## II

A man was born, sang, suffered, loved, and died.  
 Men scorned him living : let us praise him dead.  
 His life was brief and bitter, gently led  
 And proudly, but with pure and blameless pride.  
 He wrought no wrong toward any ; satisfied  
 With love and labour, whence our souls are fed  
 With largesse yet of living wine and bread.  
 Come, let us praise him : here is nought to hide.  
 Make bare the poor dead secrets of his heart,  
 Strip the stark-naked soul, that all may peer,  
 Spy, smirk, sniff, snap, snort, snivel, snarl, and  
 sneer :  
 Let none so sad, let none so sacred part  
 Lie still for pity, rest unstirred for shame,  
 But all be scanned of all men. This is fame.

## III

“ Now, what a thing it is to be an ass ! ” <sup>1</sup>  
 If one, that strutted up the brawling streets  
 As foreman of the flock whose concourse greets  
 Men’s ears with bray more dissonant than brass,  
 Would change from blame to praise as coarse and crass  
 His natural note, and learn the fawning feats  
 Of lapdogs, who but knows what luck he meets ?  
 But all in vain old fable holds her glass.

Mocked and reviled by men of poisonous breath,  
 A great man dies : but one thing worst was spared ;  
 Not all his heart by their base hands lay bared.

<sup>1</sup> *Titus Andronicus*, Act iv., Scene 2.

One comes to crown with praise the dust of death ;  
And lo, through him this worst is brought to pass.  
Now, what a thing it is to be an ass !

## IV

Shame, such as never yet dealt heavier stroke  
On heads more shameful, fall on theirs through  
whom  
Dead men may keep inviolate not their tomb,  
But all its depths these ravenous grave-worms choke.  
And yet what waste of wrath were this, to invoke  
Shame on the shameless ? Even their twin-born  
doom,  
Their native air of life, a carrion fume,  
Their natural breath of love, a noisome smoke,  
The bread they break, the cup whereof they drink,  
The record whose remembrance damns their name,  
Smells, tastes, and sounds of nothing but of shame.  
If thankfulness nor pity bids them think  
What work is this of theirs, and pause betimes,  
Not Shakespeare's grave would scare them off with  
rhymes.

## LOVE AND SCORN

## I

LOVE, loyallest and lordliest born of things,  
 Immortal that shouldst be, though all else end,  
 In plighted hearts of fearless friend with friend,  
 Whose hand may curb or clip thy plume-plucked  
 wings?

Not grief's nortime's: though these be lords and kings  
 Crowned, and their yoke bid vassal passions bend,  
 They may not pierce the spirit of sense, or blend  
 Quick poison with the soul's live watersprings.  
 The true clear heart whose core is manful trust  
 Fears not that very death may turn to dust  
 Love lit therein as toward a brother born,  
 If one touch make not all its fine gold rust,  
 If one breath blight not all its glad ripe corn,  
 And all its fire be turned to fire of scorn.

## II

Scorn only, scorn begot of bitter proof  
 By keen experience of a trustless heart,  
 Bears burning in her new-born hand the dart  
 Wherewith love dies heart-stricken, and the roof

Falls of his palace, and the storied woof  
 Long woven of many a year with life's whole art  
 Is rent like any rotten weed apart,  
 And hardly with reluctant eyes aloof  
 Cold memory guards one relic scarce exempt  
 Yet from the fierce corrosion of contempt,  
 And hardly saved by pity. Woe are we  
 That once we loved, and love not ; but we know  
 The ghost of love, surviving yet in show,  
 Where scorn has passed, is vain as grief must be.

## III

O sacred, just, inevitable scorn,  
 Strong child of righteous judgment, whom with  
 grief  
 The rent heart bears, and wins not yet relief,  
 Seeing of its pain so dire a portent born,  
 Must thou not spare one sheaf of all the corn,  
 One doit of all the treasure ? not one sheaf,  
 Not one poor doit of all ? not one dead leaf  
 Of all that fell and left behind a thorn ?  
 Is man so strong that one should scorn another ?  
 Is any as God, not made of mortal mother,  
 That love should turn in him to gall and flame ?  
 Nay : but the true is not the false heart's brother :  
 Love cannot love disloyalty : the name  
 That else it wears is love no more, but shame.

## ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD DOYLE

A LIGHT of blameless laughter, fancy-bred,  
Soft-souled and glad and kind as love or sleep,  
Fades, and sweet mirth's own eyes are fain to weep  
Because her blithe and gentlest bird is dead.  
Weep, elves and fairies all, that never shed  
    Tear yet for mortal mourning : you that keep  
    The doors of dreams whence nought of ill may  
        creep.  
Mourn once for one whose lips your honey fed.  
Let waters of the Golden River steep  
    The rose-roots whence his grave blooms rosy red,  
And murmuring of Hyblæan hives be deep  
    About the summer silence of its bed,  
And nought less gracious than a violet peep  
    Between the grass grown greener round his head.

## IN MEMORY OF HENRY A. BRIGHT

YET again another, ere his crowning year,  
 Gone from friends that here may look for him no  
     more.  
 Never now for him shall hope set wide the door,  
 Hope that hailed him hither, fain to greet him here.  
 All the gracious garden-flowers he held so dear,  
 Oldworld English blossoms, all his homestead  
     store,  
 Oldworld grief had strewn them round his bier of  
     yore,  
 Bidding each drop leaf by leaf as tear by tear ;  
 Rarer lutes than mine had borne more tuneful token,  
     Touched by subtler hands than echoing time can  
         wrong,  
 Sweet as flowers had strewn his graveward path  
     along.  
 Now may no such old sweet dirges more be spoken,  
 Now the flowers whose breath was very song are  
     broken,  
 Nor may sorrow find again so sweet a song.

## A SOLITUDE

SEA beyond sea, sand after sweep of sand,  
Here ivory smooth, here cloven and ridged with flow  
Of channelled waters soft as rain or snow,  
Stretch their lone length at ease beneath the bland  
Grey gleam of skies whose smile on wave and strand  
Shines weary like a man's who smiles to know  
That now no dream can mock his faith with show,  
Nor cloud for him seem living sea or land.

Is there an end at all of all this waste,  
These crumbling cliffs defeatured and defaced,  
These ruinous heights of sea-sapped walls that slide  
Seaward with all their banks of bleak blown flowers  
Glad yet of life, ere yet their hope subside  
Beneath the coil of dull dense waves and hours :

VICTOR HUGO :  
L'ARCHIPEL DE LA MANCHE

SEA and land are fairer now, nor aught is all the same,  
 Since a mightier hand than Time's hath woven  
 their votive wreath.  
 Rocks as swords half drawn from out the smooth  
 wave's jewelled sheath,  
 Fields whose flowers a tongue divine hath numbered  
 name by name,  
 Shores whereby the midnight or the noon clothed  
 round with flame  
 Hears the clamour jar and grind which utters from  
 beneath  
 Cries of hungering waves like beasts fast bound  
 that gnash their teeth,  
 All of these the sun that lights them lights not like  
 his fame ;  
 None of these is but the thing it was before he came.  
 Where the darkling overfalls like dens of torment  
 seethe,  
 High on tameless moorlands, down in meadows  
 bland and tame,  
 Where the garden hides, and where the wind  
 uproots the heath,  
 Glory now henceforth for ever, while the world shall  
 be,  
 Shines, a star that keeps not time with change on  
 earth and sea.

## THE TWILIGHT OF THE LORDS

## I

Is the sound a trumpet blown, or a bell for burial tolled,  
 Whence the whole air vibrates now to the clash of words like swords—  
 “ Let us break their bonds in sunder, and cast away their cords ;  
 Long enough the world has mocked us, and marvelled to behold How the grown man bears the curb whence his boyhood was controlled ”?  
 Nay, but hearken : surer counsel more sober speech affords :  
 “ Is the past not all inscribed with the praises of our Lords ?  
 Is the memory dead of deeds done of yore, the love grown cold  
 That should bind our hearts to trust in their counsels wise and bold ?  
 These that stand against you now, senseless crowds and heartless hordes,  
 Are not these the sons of men that withstood your kings of old ?  
 “ Theirs it is to bind and loose ; theirs the key that knows the wards,

Theirs the staff to lead or smite ; yours, the spades and ploughs and hods :  
 Theirs to hear and yours to cry, Power is yours, O Lords our Gods."

## II

Hear, O England : these are they that would counsel thee aright.

Wouldst thou fain have all thy sons sons of thine indeed, and free ?

Nay, but then no more at all as thou hast been shalt thou be :

Needs must many dwell in darkness, that some may look on light ;

Needs must poor men brook the wrong that ensures the rich man's right.

How shall kings and lords be worshipped, if no man bow the knee ?

How, if no man worship these, may thy praise endure with thee ?

How, except thou trust in these, shall thy name not lose its might ?

These have had their will of thee since the Norman came to smite :

Sires on grandsires, even as wave after wave along the sea,

Sons on sires have followed, steadfast as clouds or hours in flight.

Time alone hath power to say, time alone hath eyes to see,

If your walls of rule be built but of clay-compactated sods,

If your place of old shall know you no more, O Lords our Gods.

## III

Through the stalls wherein ye sit sounds a sentence  
while we wait,  
Set your house in order : is it not builded on the  
sand ?  
Set your house in order, seeing the night is hard at  
hand.  
As the twilight of the Gods in the northern dream of  
fate  
Is this hour that comes against you, albeit this hour  
come late.  
Ye whom Time and Truth bade heed, and ye would  
not understand,  
Now an axe draws nigh the tree overshadowing all  
the land,  
And its edge of doom is set to the root of all your  
state.  
Light is more than darkness now, faith than fear and  
hope than hate ;  
And what morning wills, behold, all the night shall  
not withstand.  
Rods of office, helms of rule, staffs of wise men,  
crowns of great,  
While the people willed, ye bare ; now their hopes  
and hearts expand,  
Time with silent foot makes dust of your broken  
crowns and rods,  
And the lordship of your godhead is gone, O Lords  
our Gods.

## CLEAR THE WAY !

CLEAR the way, my lords and lackeys ! you have had  
your day.

Here you have your answer—England's yea against  
your nay :

Long enough your house has held you : up, and clear  
the way !

Lust and falsehood, craft and traffic, precedent and  
gold,

Tongue of courtier, kiss of harlot, promise bought  
and sold,

Gave you heritage of empire over thralls of old.

Now that all these things are rotten, all their gold is  
rust,

Quenched the pride they lived by, dead the faith and  
cold the lust,

Shall their heritage not also turn again to dust ?

By the grace of these they reigned, who left their sons  
their sway :

By the grace of these, what England says her lords  
unsay :

Till at last her cry go forth against them—Clear the  
way !

By the grace of trust in treason knaves have lived and lied ::

By the force of fear and folly fools have fed their pride :

By the strength of sloth and custom reason stands defied.

Lest perchance your reckoning on some latter day be worse,

Halt and hearken, lords of land and princes of the purse,

Ere the tide be full that comes with blessing and with curse.

Where we stand, as where you sit, scarce falls a sprinkling spray ;

But the wind that swells, the wave that follows, none shall stay :

Spread no more of sail for shipwreck : out, and clear the way !

## A WORD FOR THE COUNTRY

**MEN**, born of the land that for ages  
 Has been honoured where freedom was dear,  
 Till your labour wax fat on its wages  
 You shall never be peers of a peer.  
 Where might is, the right is :  
 Long purses make strong swords.  
 Let weakness learn meekness :  
 God save the House of Lords !

You are free to consume in stagnation :  
 You are equal in right to obey :  
 You are brothers in bonds, and the nation  
 Is your mother—whose sons are her prey.  
 Those others your brothers,  
 Who toil not, weave, nor till,  
 Refuse you and use you  
 As waiters on their will.

But your fathers bowed down to their masters  
 And obeyed them and served and adored.  
 Shall the sheep not give thanks to their pastors ?  
 • Shall the serf not give praise to his lord ?  
 Time, waning and gaining,  
 Grown other now than then,  
 Needs pastors and masters  
 For sheep, and not for men.

If his grandsire did service in battle,  
 If his grandam was kissed by a king,  
 Must men to my lord be as cattle  
 Or as apes that he leads in a string ?  
 To deem so, to dream so,  
 Would bid the world proclaim  
 The dastards for bastards,  
 Not heirs of England's fame.

Not in spite but in right of dishonour,  
 There are actors who trample your boards  
 Till the earth that endures you upon her  
 Grows weary to bear you, my lords.  
 Your token is broken,  
 It will not pass for gold .  
 Your glory looks hoary,  
 Your sun in heaven turns cold.

They are worthy to reign on their brothers,  
 To contemn them as clods and as carles,  
 Who are Graces by grace of such mothers  
 As brightened the bed of King Charles.  
 What manner of banner,  
 What fame is this they flaunt,  
 That Britain, soul-smitten,  
 Should shrink before their vaunt ?

Bright sons of sublime prostitution,  
 You are made of the mire of the street  
 Where your grandmothers walked in pollution  
 Till a coronet shone at their feet.  
 Your Graces, whose faces  
 Bear high the bastard's brand,  
 Seem stronger no longer  
 Than all this honest land.

But the sons of her soldiers and seamen,  
 They are worthy forsooth of their hire.  
 If the father won praise from all free men,  
 Shall the sons not exult in their sire ?  
 Let money make sunny  
     And power make proud their lives,  
     And feed them and breed them  
     Like drones in drowsiest hives.

But if haply the name be a burden  
 And the souls be no kindred of theirs,  
 Should wise men rejoice in such guerdon  
 Or brave men exult in such heirs ?  
 Or rather the father  
     Frown, shamefaced, on the son,  
     And no men but foemen,  
     Deriding, cry " Well done " ?

Let the gold and the land they inherit  
 Pass ever from hand into hand :  
 In right of the forefather's merit  
 Let the gold be the son's, and the land.  
     Soft raiment, rich payment,  
     High place, the state affords ;  
     Full measure of pleasure ;  
     But now no more, my lords.

Is the future beleaguered with dangers  
 If the poor be far other than slaves ?  
 Shall the sons of the land be as strangers  
 In the land of their forefathers' graves ?  
     Shame were it to bear it,  
     And shame it were to see :  
     If free men you be, men,  
     Let proof proclaim you free.

“ But democracy means dissolution :  
 See, laden with clamour and crime,  
 How the darkness of dim revolution  
 Comes deepening the twilight of time !  
 Ah, better the fetter  
 That holds the poor man’s hand  
 Than peril of sterile  
 Blind change that wastes the land.

“ Gaze forward through clouds that environ ;  
 It shall be as it was in the past :  
 Not with dreams, but with blood and with iron,  
 Shall a nation be moulded to last.”  
 So teach they, so preach they,  
 Who dream themselves the dream  
 That hallows the gallows  
 And bids the scaffold stream.

“ With a hero at head, and a nation  
 Well gagged and well drilled and well cowed,  
 And a gospel of war and damnation,  
 Has not empire a right to be proud ?  
 Fools prattle and tattle  
 Of freedom, reason, right,  
 The beauty of duty,  
 The loveliness of light.

“ But we know, we believe it, we see it,  
 Force only has power upon earth.”  
 So be it ! and ever so be it  
 For souls that are bestial by birth !  
 Let Prussian with Russian  
 Exchange the kiss of slaves :  
 But sea-folk are free folk  
 By grace of winds and waves.

Has the past from the sepulchres beckoned ?

Let answer from Englishmen be—

No man shall be lord of us reckoned

Who is baser, not better, than we.

No coward, empowered

To soil a brave man's name :

For shame's sake and fame's sake,

Enough of fame and shame.

Fame needs not the golden addition ;

Shame bears it abroad as a brand.

Let the deed, and no more the tradition,

Speak out and be heard through the land.

Pride, rootless and fruitless,

No longer takes and gives .

But surer and purer

The soul of England lives.

He is master and lord of his brothers

Who is worthier and wiser than they.

Him only, him surely, shall others,

Else equal, observe and obey.

Truth, flawless and awless,

Do falsehood what it can,

Makes royal the loyal

And simple heart of man.

Who are these, then, that England should hearken,

Who rage and wax wroth and grow pale

If she turn from the sunsets that darken

And her ship for the morning set sail ?

Let strangers fear dangers :

All know, that hold her dear,

Dishonour upon her

Can only fall through fear.

942 A WORD FOR THE COUNTRY

Men, born of the landsmen and seamen  
Who served her with souls and with swords,  
She bids you be brothers, and free men,  
And lordless, and fearless of lords.  
She cares not, she dares not  
Care now for gold or steel :  
Light lead her, truth speed her,  
God save the Commonweal !

## A WORD FOR THE NATION

## I

A word across the water  
 Against our ears is borne,  
 Of threatenings and of slaughter,  
 Of rage and spite and scorn :  
 We have not, alack, an ally to befriend us,  
 And the season is ripe to extirpate and end us :  
 Let the German touch hands with the Gaul,  
 And the fortress of England must fall ;  
 And the sea shall be swept of her seamen,  
 And the waters they ruled be their graves,  
 And Dutchmen and Frenchmen be free men,  
 And Englishmen slaves.

## II

Our time once more is over,  
 Once more our end is near :  
 A bull without a drover,  
 The Briton reels to rear,  
 And the van of the nations is held by his betters,  
 And the seas of the world shall be loosed from  
 his fetters,  
 And his glory shall pass as a breath,  
 And the life that is in him be death ;

And the sepulchre sealed on his glory  
 For a sign to the nations shall be  
 As of Tyre and of Carthage in story,  
 Once lords of the sea.

## III

The lips are wise and loyal,  
 The hearts are brave and true,  
 Imperial thoughts and royal  
 Make strong the clamorous crew,  
 Whence louder and prouder the noise of defiance  
 Rings rage from the grave of a trustless alliance,  
 And bids us beware and be warned,  
 As abhorred of all nations and scorned,  
 As a swordless and spiritless nation,  
 A wreck on the waste of the waves.  
 So foams the released indignation  
 Of masterless slaves.

## IV

Brute throats that miss the collar,  
 Bowed backs that ask the whip,  
 Stretched hands that lack the dollar,  
 And many a lie-seared lip,  
 Forefeel and foreshow for us signs as funereal  
 As the signs that were regal of yore and imperial ;  
 We shall pass as the princes they served,  
 We shall reap what our fathers deserved,  
 And the place that was England's be taken  
 By one that is worthier than she,  
 And the yoke of her empire be shaken  
 Like spray from the sea.

## V

French hounds, whose necks are aching  
Still from the chain they crave,  
In dog-day madness breaking  
The dog-leash, thus may rave :  
But the seas that for ages have fostered and fenced  
her  
Laugh, echoing the yell of their kennel against her  
And their moan if destruction draw near them  
And the roar of her laughter to hear them ;  
For she knows that if Englishmen be men  
Their England has all that she craves ;  
All love and all honour from free men,  
All hatred from slaves.

## VI

All love that rests upon her  
Like sunshine and sweet air,  
All light of perfect honour  
And praise that ends in prayer,  
She wins not more surely, she wears not more  
proudly,  
Than the token of tribute that clatters thus loudly,  
The tribute of foes when they meet  
That rattles and rings at her feet,  
The tribute of rage and of rancour,  
The tribute of slaves to the free,  
To the people whose hope hath its anchor  
Made fast in the sea.

## VII

No fool that bows the back he  
 Feels fit for scourge or brand,  
 No scurril scribes that lackey  
 The lords of Lackeyland,  
 No penman that yearns, as he turns on his pallet,  
 For the place or the pence of a peer or a valet,  
 No whelp of as currish a pack  
 As the litter whose yelp it gives back,  
 Though he answer the cry of his brother  
 As echoes might answer from caves,  
 Shall be witness as though for a mother  
 Whose children were slaves.

## VIII

But those found fit to love her,  
 Whose love has root in faith,  
 Who hear, though darkness cover  
 Time's face, what memory saith,  
 Who seek not the service of great men or small men  
 But the weal that is common for comfort of all men,  
 Those yet that in trust have beholden  
 Truth's dawn over England grow golden  
 And quicken the darkness that stagnates  
 And scatter the shadows that flee,  
 Shall reply for her meanest as magnates  
 And masters by sea.

## IX

And all shall mark her station,  
 Her message all shall hear,  
 When, equal-eyed, the nation  
 Bids all her sons draw near,

And freedom be more than tradition or faction,  
And thought be no swifter to serve her than action,  
And justice alone be above her,  
That love may be prouder to love her,  
And time on the crest of her story

Inscribe, as remembrance engraves,  
The sign that subdues with its glory  
    Kings, princes, and slaves.

## A WORD FROM THE PSALMIST

Ps. xciv. 8

## I

“ TAKE heed, ye unwise among the people :  
 O ye fools, when will ye understand ? ”  
 From pulpit or choir beneath the steeple,  
 Though the words be fierce, the tones are  
 bland.

But a louder than the Church’s echo thunders  
 In the ears of men who may not choose but hear ;  
 And the heart in him that hears it leaps and wonders,  
 With triumphant hope astonished, or with fear.  
 For the names whose sound was power awaken  
 Neither love nor reverence now nor dread ;  
 Their strongholds and shrines are stormed and  
 taken, . . .  
 Their kingdom and all its works are dead.

## II

Take heed : for the tide of time is risen :  
 It is full not yet, though now so high  
 That spirits and hopes long pent in prison  
 Feel round them a sense of freedom nigh,

And a savour keen and sweet of brine and billow,  
And a murmur deep and strong of deepening  
strength.  
Though the watchman dream, with sloth or pride for  
pillow,  
And the night be long, not endless is its length.  
From the springs of dawn, from clouds that sever,  
From the equal heavens and the eastward sea,  
The witness comes that endures for ever,  
Till men be brethren and thralls be free.

## III

But the wind of the wings of dawn expanding  
Strikes chill on your hearts as change and  
death.  
Ye are old, but ye have not understanding ;  
And proud, but your pride is a dead man's  
breath.  
And your wise men, toward whose words and signs  
ye hearken,  
And your strong men, in whose hands ye put your  
trust,  
Strain eyes to behold but clouds and dreams that  
darken,  
Stretch hands that can find but weapons red with  
rust.  
Their watchword rings, and the night rejoices,  
But the lark's note laughs at the night-bird's  
notes—  
“ Is virtue verily found in voices ?  
Or is wisdom won when all win votes ?

## IV

“ Take heed, ye unwise indeed, who listen  
 When the wind’s wings beat and shift and  
 change ;  
 Whose hearts are uplift, whose eyeballs glisten,  
 With desire of new things great and strange.  
 Let not dreams misguide nor any visions wrong you :  
 That which has been, it is now as it was then.  
 Is not Compromise of old a god among you ?  
 Is not Precedent indeed a king of men ?  
 But the windy hopes that lead mislead you,  
 And the sounds ye hear are void and vain,  
 Is a vote a coat ? will franchise feed you,  
 Or words be a roof against the rain ?

## V

“ Eight ages are gone since kingship entered,  
 With knights and peers at its harnessed back,  
 And the land, no more in its own strength centred,  
 Was cast for a prey to the princely pack.  
 But we pared the fangs and clipped the ravening  
 claws of it,  
 And good was in time brought forth of an evil  
 thing,  
 And the land’s high name waxed lordlier in war  
 because of it,  
 When chartered Right had bridled and curbed the  
 king.  
 And what so fair has the world beholden,  
 And what so firm has withstood the years,  
 As Monarchy bound in chains all golden,  
 And Freedom guarded about with peers ?

## VI

“ How think ye ? know not your lords and masters  
 What collars are meet for brawling throats ?  
 Is change not mother of strange disasters ?  
 Shall plague or peril be stayed by votes ?  
 Out of precedent and privilege and order  
 . Have we plucked the flower of compromise, whose  
 root  
 Bears blossoms that shine from border again to  
 border,  
 And the mouths of many are fed with its temperate  
 fruit.  
 Your masters are wiser than ye, their henchmen :  
 Your lords know surely whereof ye have need.  
 Equality ? Fools, would you fain be Frenchmen ?  
 Is equity more than a word indeed ?

## VII

“ Your voices, forsooth, your most sweet voices,  
 Your worthy voices, your love, your hate,  
 Your choice, who know not whereof your choice is,  
 What stays are these for a stable state ?  
 Inconstancy, blind and deaf with its own fierce babble,  
 Swells ever your throats with storm of uncertain  
 cheers :  
 He leans on straws who leans on a light-souled  
 rabble ;  
 His trust is frail who puts not his trust in peers.”  
 So shrills the message whose word convinces  
 Of righteousness knaves, of wisdom fools ;  
 That serfs may boast them because of princes,  
 And the weak rejoice that the strong man rules.

## VIII

True friends, ye people, are these, the faction  
 Full-mouthing that flatters and snarls and bays,  
 That fawns and foams with alternate action,  
 And mocks the names that it soils with praise.  
 As from fraud and force their power had first begin-  
 ning,  
 So by righteousness and peace it may not stand,  
 But by craft of state and nets of secret spinning,  
 Words that weave and unweave wiles like ropes of  
 sand,  
 Form, custom, and gold, and laws grown hoary,  
 And strong tradition that guards the gate :  
 To these, O people, to these give glory,  
 That your name among nations may be great.

## IX

How long—for haply not now much longer—  
 Shall fear put faith in a faithless creed,  
 And shapes and shadows of truths be stronger  
 In strong men's eyes than the truth indeed ?  
 If freedom be not a word that dies when spoken,  
 If justice be not a dream whence men must wake,  
 How shall not the bonds of the thraldom of old be  
 broken,  
 And right put might in the hands of them that  
 break ?  
 For clear as a tocsin from the steeple  
 Is the cry gone forth along the land,  
 Take heed, ye unwise among the people :  
 O ye fools, when will ye understand ?

## A BALLAD AT PARTING

SEA to sea that clasps and fosters England, uttering  
evermore

Song eterne and praise immortal of the indomitable  
shore,

Lifts aloud her constant heart up, south to north  
and east to west,

Here in speech that shames all music, there in thunder-  
throated roar,

Chiming concord out of discord, waking rapture  
out of rest.

All her ways are lovely, all her works and symbols  
are divine,

Yet shall man love best what first bade leap his  
heart and bend his knee ;

Yet where first his whole soul worshipped shall his  
soul set up her shrine :

Nor may love not know the lovelier, fair as both  
beheld may be,

Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait  
south-western sea.

Though their chant bear all one burden, as ere man  
was born it bore ;

Though the burden be diviner than the songs all  
souls adore :

Yet may love not choose but choose between them  
which to love the best.

Me the sea my nursing-mother, me the Channel  
green and hoar,

Holds at heart more fast than all things, bares for  
me the goodlier breast,

Lifts for me the lordlier love-song, bids for me more  
sunlight shine,

Sounds for me the stormier trumpet of the  
sweeter strain to me.

So the broad pale Thames is loved not like the tawny  
springs of Tyne :

Choice is clear between them for the soul whose  
vision holds in fee

Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait  
south-western sea.

Choice is clear, but dear is either ; nor has either not  
in store

Many a likeness, many a written sign of spirit-  
searching lore,

Whence the soul takes fire of sweet remembrance,  
magnified and blest.

Thought of songs whose flame-winged feet have trod  
the unfooted water-floor

When the lord of all the living lords of souls bade  
speed their quest ;

Soft live sound like children's babble down the  
rippling sand's incline,

Or the lovely song that loves them, hailed with  
thankful prayer and plea ;

These are parcels of the harvest here whose gathered  
sheaves are mine,

Garnered now, but sown and reaped where winds  
make wild with wrath or glee  
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait  
south-western sea.

Song, thy name is freedom, seeing thy strength was  
born of breeze and brine.  
Fare now forth and fear no fortune : such a seal is  
set on thee.  
Joy begat and memory bare thee, seeing in spirit a  
twofold sign,  
Even the sign of those thy fosters, each as thou  
from all time free,  
Here the limitless north-eastern, there the strait  
south-western sea.



# **ASTROPHEL**

**AND OTHER POEMS**

**TO WILLIAM MORRIS**

## ASTROPHEL

AFTER READING SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S ARCADIA IN THE  
GARDEN OF AN OLD ENGLISH MANOR HOUSE.

## I

A STAR in the silence that follows  
The song of the death of the sun  
Speaks music in heaven, and the hollows  
And heights of the world are as one ;  
One lyre that outsings and outlightens  
The rapture of sunset, and thrills  
Mute night till the sense of it brightens  
The soul that it fills.

The flowers of the sun that is sunken  
Hang heavy of heart as of head ;  
The bees that have eaten and drunken  
The soul of their sweetness are fled ;  
But a sunflower of song, on whose honey  
My spirit has fed as a bee,  
Makes sunnier than morning was sunny  
The twilight for me.

The letters and lines on the pages  
That sundered mine eyes and the flowers

Wax faint as the shadows of ages  
 That sunder their season and ours ;  
 As the ghosts of the centuries that sever  
 A season of colourless time  
 From the days whose remembrance is ever,  
 As they were, sublime.

The season that bred and that cherished  
 The soul that I commune with yet,  
 Had it utterly withered and perished  
 To rise not again as it set,  
 Shame were it that Englishmen living  
 Should read as their forefathers read  
 The books of the praise and thanksgiving  
 Of Englishmen dead

O light of the land that adored thee  
 And kindled thy soul with her breath,  
 Whose life, such as fate would afford thee,  
 Was lovelier than aught but thy death,  
 By what name, could thy lovers but know it,  
 Might love of thee hail thee afar,  
 Philisides, Astrophel, poet  
 Whose love was thy star ?

A star in the moondawn of Maytime,  
 A star in the cloudland of change ;  
 Too splendid and sad for the daytime  
 To cheer or eclipse or estrange ;  
 Too sweet for tradition or vision  
 To see but through shadows of tears  
 Rise deathless across the division  
 Of measureless years.

The twilight may deepen and harden  
 As nightward the stream of it runs  
 Till starshine transfigure a garden  
 Whose radiance responds to the sun's :  
 The light of the love of thee darkens  
 The lights that arise and that set :  
 The love that forgets thee not hearkens  
 If England forgot.

## II

Bright and brief in the sight of grief and love the light  
 of thy lifetime shone,  
 Seen and felt by the gifts it dealt, the grace it gave,  
 and again was gone :  
 Ay, but now it is death, not thou, whom time has  
 conquered as years pass on.

Ay, not yet may the land forget that bore and loved  
 thee and praised and wept,  
 Sidney, lord of the stainless sword, the name of  
 names that her heart's love kept  
 Fast as thine did her own, a sign to light thy life till  
 it sank and slept.

Bright as then for the souls of men thy brave Arcadia  
 resounds and shines,  
 Lit with love that beholds above all joys and sorrows  
 the steadfast signs,  
 Faith, a splendour that hope makes tender, and truth,  
 whose presage the soul divines.

All the glory that girds the story of all thy life as  
 with sunlight round,

All the spell that on all souls fell who saw thy spirit,  
and held them bound,  
Lives for all that have heard the call and cadence yet  
of its music sound.

Music bright as the soul of light, for wings an eagle,  
for notes a dove,  
Leaps and shines from the lustrous lines where-  
through thy soul from afar above  
Shone and sang till the darkness rang with light  
whose fire is the fount of love.

Love that led thee alive, and fed thy soul with  
sorrows and joys and fears,  
Love that sped thee, alive and dead, to fame's fair  
goal with thy peerless peers,  
Feeds the flame of thy quenchless name with light  
that lightens the rayless years.

Dark as sorrow though night and morrow may lower  
with presage of clouded fame,  
How may she that of old bare thee, may Sidney's  
England, be brought to shame ?  
How should this be, while England is ? What need  
of answer beyond thy name ?

## III

From the love that transfigures thy glory,  
From the light of the dawn of thy death,  
The life of thy song and thy story  
Took subtler and fierier breath.

And we, though the day and the morrow  
 Set fear and thanksgiving at strife,  
 Hail yet in the star of thy sorrow  
 The sun of thy life.

Shame and fear may beset men here, and bid thanks-  
 giving and pride be dumb :  
 ·Faith, discrowned of her praise, and wound about  
 with toils till her life wax numb,  
 Scarce may see if the sundawn be, if darkness die  
 not and dayrise come.

But England, enmeshed and benetted  
 With spiritless villainies round,  
 With counsels of cowardice fretted,  
 With trammels of treason enwound,  
 Is yet, though the season be other  
 Than wept and rejoiced over thee,  
 Thine England, thy lover, thy mother,  
 Sublime as the sea.

Hers wast thou : if her face be now less bright, or  
 seem for an hour less brave,  
 Let but thine on her darkness shine, thy saviour  
 spirit revive and save,  
 Time shall see, as the shadows flee, her shame  
 entombed in a shameful grave.

If death and not life were the portal  
 That opens on life at the last,  
 If the spirit of Sidney were mortal  
 And the past of it utterly past,

Fear stronger than honour was ever,  
Forgetfulness mightier than fame,  
Faith knows not if England should never  
Subside into shame.

Yea, but yet is thy sun not set, thy sunbright spirit  
of trust withdrawn :  
England's love of thee burns above all hopes that  
darken or fears that fawn :  
Hers thou art : and the faithful heart that hopes  
begets upon darkness dawn.

The sunset that sunrise will follow  
Is less than the dream of a dream :  
The starshine on height and on hollow  
Sheds promise that dawn shall redeem :  
The night, if the daytime would hide it,  
Shows lovelier, aflame and afar,  
Thy soul and thy Stella's beside it,  
A star by a star.

## A NYMPHOLEPT

SUMMER, and noon, and a splendour of silence, felt,  
 Seen, and heard of the spirit within the sense.  
 Soft through the frondage the shades of the sun-  
 beams melt,  
 Sharp through the foliage the shafts of them, keen  
 and dense,  
 Cleave, as discharged from the string of the God's  
 bow, tense  
 As a war-steed's girth, and bright as a warrior's belt.  
 Ah, why should an hour that is heaven for an hour  
 pass hence ?

I dare not sleep for delight of the perfect hour,  
 Lest God be wroth that his gift should be scorned  
 of man.  
 The face of the warm bright world is the face of a  
 flower,  
 The word of the wind and the leaves that the light  
 winds fan  
 As the word that quickened at first into flame, and  
 ran,  
 Creative and subtle and fierce with invasive power,  
 Through darkness and cloud, from the breath of  
 the one God, Pan.

The perfume of earth possessed by the sun pervades  
The chaster air that he soothes but with sense of  
sleep.

Soft, imminent, strong as desire that prevails and  
fades,

The passing noon that beholds not a cloudlet weep  
Imbues and impregnates life with delight more  
deep

Than dawn or sunset or moonrise on lawns or glades  
Can shed from the skies that receive it and may  
not keep.

The skies may hold not the splendour of sundown  
fast;

It wanes into twilight as dawn dies down into  
day.

And the moon, triumphant when twilight is overpast,  
Takes pride but awhile in the hours of her stately  
sway.

But the might of the noon, though the light of it  
pass away,

Leaves earth fulfilled of desires and of dreams that  
last;

But if any there be that hath sense of them none  
can say.

For if any there be that hath sight of them, sense, or  
trust

Made strong by the might of a vision, the strength  
of a dream,

His lips shall straiten and close as a dead man's  
must,

His heart shall be sealed as the voice of a frost-  
bound stream.

For the deep mid mystery of light and of heat that  
seem  
To clasp and pierce dark earth, and enkindle dust,  
Shall a man's faith say what it is? or a man's  
guess deem?

Sleep lies not heavier on eyes that have watched all  
night

Than hangs the heat of the noon on the hills and  
trees.

Why now should the haze not open, and yield to  
sight

A fairer secret than hope or than slumber sees?

I seek not heaven with submission of lips and knees,  
With worship and prayer for a sign till it leap to  
light:

I gaze on the gods about me, and call on these.

I call on the gods hard by, the divine dim powers  
Whose likeness is here at hand, in the breathless  
air,

In the pulseless peace of the fervid and silent flowers,  
In the faint sweet speech of the waters that whisper  
there.

Ah, what should darkness do in a world so fair?

The bent-grass heaves not, the couch-grass quails  
not or cowers;

The wind's kiss frets not the rowan's or aspen's  
hair.

But the silence trembles with passion of sound sup-  
pressed,

And the twilight quivers and yearns to the sun-  
ward, wrung

With love as with pain ; and the wide wood's motionless breast  
Is thrilled with a dumb desire that would fain find tongue  
And palpitates, tongueless as she whom a man-snake stung,  
Whose heart now heaves in the nightingale, never at rest  
Nor satiated ever with song till her last be sung.

Is it rapture or terror that circles me round, and invades  
Each vein of my life with hope—if it be not fear ?  
Each pulse that awakens my blood into rapture fades,  
Each pulse that subsides into dread of a strange thing near  
Requicken with sense of a terror less dread than dear.  
Is peace not one with light in the deep green glades  
Where summer at noonday slumbers ? Is peace not here ?

The tall thin stems of the firs, and the roof sublime  
That screens from the sun the floor of the steep still wood,  
Deep, silent, splendid, and perfect and calm as time,  
Stand fast as ever in sight of the night they stood,  
When night gave all that moonlight and dewfall could.  
The dense ferns deepen, the moss glows warm as the thyme :  
The wild heath quivers about me : the world is good.

Is it Pan's breath, fierce in the tremulous maidenhair,  
That bids fear creep as a snake through the wood-  
lands, felt

In the leaves that it stirs not yet, in the mute bright air,  
In the stress of the sun? For here has the great  
God dwelt:

For hence were the shafts of his love or his anger  
dealt.

For here has his wrath been fierce as his love was fair,  
When each was as fire to the darkness its breath  
bade melt.

Is it love, is it dread, that enkindles the trembling  
noon,

That yearns, reluctant in rapture that fear has fed,  
As man for woman, as woman for man? Full soon,  
If I live, and the life that may look on him drop  
not dead,

Shall the ear that hears not a leaf quake hear his  
tread,

The sense that knows not the sound of the deep day's  
tune

Receive the God, be it love that he brings or dread.

The naked noon is upon me: the fierce dumb spell,  
The fearful charm of the strong sun's imminent  
might,

Unmerciful, steadfast, deeper than seas that swell,  
Pervades, invades, appals me with loveless light,  
With harsher awe than breathes in the breath of  
night.

Have mercy, God who art all! For I know thee well,  
How sharp is thine eye to lighten, thine hand to  
smite.

The whole wood feels thee, the whole air fears thee :  
but fear

So deep, so dim, so sacred, is wellnigh sweet.  
For the light that hangs and broods on the wood-  
lands here,

Intense, invasive, intolerant, imperious, and meet  
To lighten the works of thine hands and the ways  
of thy feet,

Is hot with the fire of the breath of thy life, and dear  
As hope that shrivels or shrinks not for frost or  
heat.

Thee, thee the supreme dim godhead, approved afar,  
Perceived of the soul and conceived of the sense of  
man,

We scarce dare love, and we dare not fear : the star  
We call the sun, that lit us when life began  
To brood on the world that is thine by his grace  
for a span,

Conceals and reveals in the semblance of things that  
are

Thine immanent presence, the pulse of thy heart's  
life, Pan.

The fierce mid noon that wakens and warms the  
snake

Conceals thy mercy, reveals thy wrath : and again  
The dew-bright hour that assuages the twilight  
brake

Conceals thy wrath and reveals thy mercy : then  
Thou art fearful only for evil souls of men  
That feel with nightfall the serpent within them  
wake,

And hate the holy darkness on glade and glen.

Yea, then we know not and dream not if ill things be,  
 Or if aught of the work of the wrong of the world  
 be thine.

We hear not the footfall of terror that treads the  
 sea,

We hear not the moan of winds that assail the  
 pine :

We see not if shipwreck reign in the storm's dim  
 shrine ;

If death do service and doom bear witness to thee  
 We see not,—know not if blood for thy lips be  
 wine.

But in all things evil and fearful that fear may scan,  
 As in all things good, as in all things fair that fall,  
 We know thee present and latent, the lord of man ;  
 In the murmuring of doves, in the clamouring of  
 winds that call  
 And wolves that howl for their prey ; in the mid-  
 night's pall,  
 In the naked and nymph-like feet of the dawn, O  
 Pan,  
 And in each life living, O thou the God who art all.

Smiling and singing, wailing and wringing of hands,  
 Laughing and weeping, watching and sleeping, still  
 Proclaim but and prove but thee, as the shifted sands  
 Speak forth and show but the strength of the sea's  
 wild will  
 That sifts and grinds them as grain in the storm-  
 wind's mill.

In thee is the doom that falls and the doom that  
 stands :

The tempests utter thy word, and the stars fulfil.

Where Etna shudders with passion and pain volcanic  
 That rend her heart as with anguish that rends a  
 man's,  
 Where Typho labours, and finds not his thews Titanic,  
 In breathless torment that ever the flame's breath  
 fans,  
 Men felt and feared thee of old, whose pastoral  
 clans  
 Were given to the charge of thy keeping ; and  
 soundless panic  
 Held fast the woodland whose depths and whose  
 heights were Pan's.

And here, though fear be less than delight, and awe  
 Be one with desire and with worship of earth and  
 thee,  
 So mild seems now thy secret and speechless law,  
 So fair and fearless and faithful and godlike she,  
 So soft the spell of thy whisper on stream and sea,  
 Yet man should fear lest he see what of old men  
 saw  
 And withered : yet shall I quail if thy breath smite  
 me.

Lord God of life and of light and of all things fair,  
 Lord God of ravin and ruin and all things dim,  
 Death seals up life, and darkness the sunbright air,  
 And the stars that watch blind earth in the deep  
 night swim  
 Laugh, saying, " What God is your God, that ye  
 call on him ?  
 What is man, that the God who is guide of our way  
 should care  
 If day for a man be golden, or night be grim ? "

But thou, dost thou hear ? Stars too but abide for a span,  
Gods too but endure for a season ; but thou, if thou be  
God, more than shadows conceived and adored of man,  
Kind Gods and fierce, that bound him or made him free,  
The skies that scorn us are less in thy sight than we,  
Whose souls have strength to conceive and perceive thee, Pan,  
With sense more subtle than senses that hear and see.

Yet may not it say, though it seek thee and think to find  
One soul of sense in the fire and the frost-bound clod,  
What heart is this, what spirit alive or blind,  
That moves thee : only we know that the ways we trod  
We tread, with hands unguided, with feet unshod,  
With eyes unlightened ; and yet, if with steadfast mind,  
Perchance may we find thee and know thee at last for God.

Yet then should God be dark as the dawn is bright,  
And bright as the night is dark on the world—no more.  
Light slays not darkness, and darkness absorbs not light ;  
And the labour of evil and good from the years of yore

Is even as the labour of waves on a sunless shore.  
 And he who is first and last, who is depth and height,  
     Keeps silence now, as the sun when the woods  
     wax hoar.

The dark dumb godhead innate in the fair world's life  
     Imbues the rapture of dawn and of noon with  
     dread,

Infects the peace of the star-shod night with strife,  
     Informs with terror the sorrow that guards the  
     dead.

No service of bended knee or of humbled head  
 May soothe or subdue the God who has change to  
     wife :  
     And life with death is as morning with evening wed.

And yet, if the light and the life in the light that here  
     Seem soft and splendid and fervid as sleep may  
     seem

Be more than the shine of a smile or the flash of a tear,  
     Sleep, change, and death are less than a spell-  
     struck dream,

And fear than the fall of a leaf on a starlit stream.  
 And yet, if the hope that hath said it absorb not fear,  
     What helps it man that the stars and the waters  
     gleam ?

What helps it man, that the noon be indeed intense,  
     The night be indeed worth worship ? Fear and  
     pain

Were lords and masters yet of the secret sense,  
     Which now dares deem not that light is as dark-  
     ness, fain  
     Though dark dreams be to declare it, crying in vain.

For whence, thou God of the light and the darkness,  
whence

Dawns now this vision that bids not the sunbeams  
wane?

What light, what shadow, diviner than dawn or  
night,

Draws near, makes pause, and again—or I dream—  
draws near?

More soft than shadow, more strong than the strong  
sun's light,

More pure than moonbeams—yea, but the rays  
run sheer

As fire from the sun through the dusk of the pine-  
wood, clear

And constant; yea, but the shadow itself is bright

That the light clothes round with love that is one  
with fear.

Above and behind it the noon and the woodland lie,

Terrible, radiant with mystery, superb and subdued,  
Triumphant in silence; and hardly the sacred sky

Seems free from the tyrannous weight of the dumb  
fierce mood

Which rules as with fire and invasion of beams  
that brood

The breathless rapture of earth till its hour pass by  
And leave her spirit released and her peace renewed.

I sleep not: never in sleep has a man beholden  
This. From the shadow that trembles and yearns  
with light

Suppressed and elate and reluctant—obscure and  
golden

As water kindled with presage of dawn or night—  
 A form, a face, a wonder to sense and sight,  
 Grows great as the moon through the month ; and  
 her eyes embolden  
 Fear, till it change to desire, and desire to delight.

I sleep not : sleep would die of a dream so strange ;  
 A dream so sweet would die as a rainbow dies,  
 As a sunbow laughs and is lost on the waves that  
 range  
 And reck not of light that flickers or spray that flies.  
 But the sun withdraws not; the woodland shrinks  
 not or sighs,  
 No sweet thing sickens with sense or with fear of  
 change ;  
 Light wounds not, darkness blinds not, my steadfast  
 eyes.

Only the soul in my sense that receives the soul  
 Whence now my spirit is kindled with breathless  
 bliss  
 Knows well if the light that wounds it with love  
 makes whole,  
 If hopes that carol be louder than fears that hiss,  
 If truth be spoken of flowers and of waves that kiss,  
 Of clouds and stars that contend for a sunbright goal.  
 And yet may I dream that I dream not indeed of  
 this ?

An earth-born dreamer, constrained by the bonds of  
 birth,  
 Held fast by the flesh, compelled by his veins that  
 beat  
 And kindle to rapture or wrath, to desire or to mirth,

May hear not surely the fall of immortal feet,  
 May feel not surely if heaven upon earth be sweet ;  
 And here is my sense fulfilled of the joys of earth,  
 Light, silence, bloom, shade, murmur of leaves  
 that meet.

Bloom, fervour, and perfume of grasses and flowers  
 aglow,  
 Breathe and brighten about me : the darkness  
 gleams,  
 The sweet light shivers and laughs on the slopes  
 below,  
 Made soft by leaves that lighten and change like  
 dreams ;  
 The silence thrills with the whisper of secret streams  
 That well from the heart of the woodland : these I  
 know :  
 Earth bore them, heaven sustained them with  
 showers and beams.

I lean my face to the heather, and drink the sun  
 Whose flame-lit odour satiates the flowers : mine  
 eyes  
 Close, and the goal of delight and of life is one :  
 No more I crave of earth or her kindred skies.  
 No more ? But the joy that springs from them  
 smiles and flies .  
 The sweet work wrought of them surely, the good  
 work done,  
 If the mind and the face of the season be loveless,  
 dies.  
 Thee, therefore, thee would I come to, cleave to,  
 cling,  
 If haply thy heart be kind and thy gifts be good,

Unknown sweet spirit, whose vesture is soft in spring,  
In summer splendid, in autumn pale as the wood  
That shudders and wanes and shrinks as a shamed  
thing should,

In winter bright as the mail of a war-worn king  
Who stands where foes fled far from the face of  
him stood.

My spirit or thine is it, breath of thy life or of mine,  
Which fills my sense with a rapture that casts out  
fear?

Pan's dim frown wanes, and his wild eyes brighten  
as thine,  
Transformed as night or as day by the kindling  
year.

Earth-born, or mine eye were withered that sees,  
mine ear

That hears were stricken to death by the sense divine,  
Earth-born I know thee: but heaven is about me  
here.

The terror that whispers in darkness and flames in  
light,

The doubt that speaks in the silence of earth and  
sea,

The sense, more fearful at noon than in midmost  
night,

Of wrath scarce hushed and of imminent ill to be;  
Where are they? Heaven is as earth, and as  
heaven to me

Earth: for the shadows that sundered them here  
take flight;

And nought is all, as am I; but a dream of thee.

## ON THE SOUTH COAST

To THEODORE WATTS

HILLS and valleys where April rallies his radiant  
squadron of flowers and birds,  
Steep strange beaches and lustrous reaches of  
fluctuant sea that the land engirds,  
Fields and downs that the sunrise crowns with life  
diviner than lives in words,

Day by day of resurgent May salute the sun with  
sublime acclaim,  
Change and brighten with hours that lighten and  
darken, girdled with cloud or flame ;  
Earth's fair face in alternate grace beams, blooms,  
and lowers, and is yet the same.

Twice each day the divine sea's play makes glad with  
glory that comes and goes  
Field and street that her waves keep sweet, when  
past the bounds of their old repose,  
Fast and fierce in renewed reverse, the foam-flecked  
estuary ebbs and flows.

Broad and bold through the stays of old staked fast  
with trunks of the wildwood tree,  
Up from shoreward, impelled far forward, by marsh  
and meadow, by lawn and lea,  
Inland still at her own wild will swells, rolls, and  
revels the surging sea.

Strong as time, and as faith sublime,—clothed round  
with shadows of hopes and fears,  
Nights and morrows, and joys and sorrows, alive  
with passion of prayers and tears,—  
Stands the shrine that has seen decline eight hundred  
waxing and waning years.

Tower set square to the storms of air and change of  
season that glooms and glows,  
Wall and roof of it tempest-proof, and equal ever to  
suns and snows,  
Bright with riches of radiant niches and pillars  
smooth as a straight stem grows.

Aisle and nave that the whelming wave of time has  
whelmed not or touched or neared,  
Arch and vault without stain or fault, by hands of  
craftsmen we know not reared,  
Time beheld them, and time was quelled ; and  
change passed by them as one that feared.

Time that flies as a dream, and dies as dreams that  
die with the sleep they feed,  
Here alone in a garb of stone incarnate stands as a  
god indeed,  
Stern and fair, and of strength to bear all burdens  
mortal to man's frail seed.

Men and years are as leaves or tears that storm or  
sorrow is fain to shed :

These go by as the winds that sigh, and none takes  
note of them quick or dead :

Time, whose breath is their birth and death, folds  
here his pinions, and bows his head.

Still the sun that beheld begun the work wrought  
here of unwearied hands

Sees, as then, though the Red King's men held  
ruthless rule over lawless lands,

Stand their massive design, impassive, pure and  
proud as a virgin stands.

Statelier still as the years fulfil their count, subserving  
her sacred state,

Grows the hoary grey church whose story silence  
utters and age makes great :

Statelier seems it than shines in dreams the face un-  
veiled of unvanquished fate.

Fate, more high than the star-shown sky, more deep  
than waters unsounded, shines

Keen and far as the final star on souls that seek not  
for charms or signs ;

Yet more bright is the love-shown light of men's  
hands lighted in songs or shrines.

Love and trust that the grave's deep dust can soil  
not, neither may fear put out,

Witness yet that their record set stands fast, though  
years be as hosts in rout,

Spent and slain ; but the signs remain that beat  
back darkness and cast forth doubt.

Men that wrought by the grace of thought and toil  
things goodlier than praise dare trace,  
Fair as all that the world may call most fair, save  
only the sea's own face,  
Shrines or songs that the world's change wrongs not,  
live by grace of their own gift's grace.

Dead, their names that the night reclaims—alive,  
their works that the day relumes—  
Sink and stand, as in stone and sand engraven : none  
may behold their tombs :  
Nights and days shall record their praise while here  
this flower of their grafting blooms.

Flower more fair than the sun-thrilled air bids laugh  
and lighten and wax and rise,  
Fruit more bright than the fervent light sustains  
with strength from the kindled skies,  
Flower and fruit that the deathless root of man's  
love rears though the man's name dies.

Stately stands it, the work of hands unknown of :  
statelier, afar and near,  
Rise around it the heights that bound our landward  
gaze from the seaboard here ;  
Downs that swerve and aspire, in curve and change  
of heights that the dawn holds dear.

Dawn falls fair on the grey walls there confronting  
dawn, on the low green lea,  
Lone and sweet as for fairies' feet held sacred, silent  
and strange and free,  
Wild and wet with its rills ; but yet more fair falls  
dawn on the fairer sea.

Eastward, round by the high green bound of hills  
that fold the remote fields in,  
Strive and shine on the low sea-line fleet waves and  
beams when the days begin ;  
Westward glow, when the days burn low, the sun  
that yields and the stars that win.

Rose-red eve on the seas that heave sinks fair as  
dawn when the first ray peers ;  
Winds are glancing from sunbright Lancing to  
Shoreham, crowned with the grace of years ;  
Shoreham, clad with the sunset, glad and grave with  
glory that death reveres.

Death, more proud than the kings' heads bowed  
before him, stronger than all things, bows  
Here his head : as if death were dead, and kingship  
plucked from his crownless brows,  
Life hath here such a face of cheer as change appals  
not and time avows.

Skies fulfilled with the sundown, stilled and splendid,  
spread as a flower that spreads,  
Pave with rarer device and fairer than heaven's the  
luminous oyster-beds,  
Grass-embanked, and in square plots ranked, inlaid  
with gems that the sundown sheds.

Squares more bright and with lovelier light than  
heaven that kindled it shines with shine  
Warm and soft as the dome aloft, but heavenlier yet  
than the sun's own shrine :  
Heaven is high, but the water-sky lit here seems  
deeper and more divine.

Flowers on flowers, that the whole world's bowers  
may show not, here may the sunset show,  
Lightly graven in the waters paven with ghostly gold  
by the clouds aglow :  
Bright as love is the vault above, but lovelier lightens  
the wave below.

Rosy grey, or as fiery spray full-plumed, or greener  
than emerald, gleams  
Plot by plot as the skies allot for each its glory,  
divine as dreams  
Lit with fire of appeased desire which sounds the  
secret of all that seems ;

Dreams that show what we fain would know, and  
know not save by the grace of sleep,  
Sleep whose hands have removed the bands that eyes  
long waking and fain to weep  
Feel fast bound on them—light around them strange,  
and darkness above them steep.

Yet no vision that heals division of love from love,  
and renews awhile  
Life and breath in the lips where death has quenched  
the spirit of speech and smile,  
Shows on earth, or in heaven's mid mirth, where no  
fears enter or doubts defile,

Aught more fair than the radiant air and water here  
by the twilight wed,  
Here made one by the waning sun whose last love  
quicken to rosebright red  
Half the crown of the soft high down that rears to  
northward its wood-girt head.

There, when day is at height of sway, men's eyes  
who stand, as we oft have stood,  
High where towers with its world of flowers the  
golden spinny that flanks the wood,  
See before and around them shore and seaboard glad  
as their gifts are good.

Higher and higher to the north aspire the green  
smooth-swelling unending downs ;  
East and west on the brave earth's breast glow  
girdle-jewels of gleaming towns ;  
Southward shining, the lands declining subside in  
peace that the sea's light crowns.

Westward wide in its fruitful pride the plain lies  
lordly with plenteous grace ;  
Fair as dawn's when the fields and lawns desire her  
glitters the glad land's face :  
Eastward yet is the sole sign set of elder days and a  
lordlier race.

Down beneath us afar, where seethe in wilder weather  
the tides aflow,  
Hurled up hither and drawn down thither in quest of  
rest that they may not know,  
Still as dew on a flower the blue broad stream now  
sleeps in the fields below.

Mild and bland in the fair green land it smiles, and  
takes to its heart the sky ;  
Scarce the meads and the fens, the reeds and grasses,  
still as they stand or lie,  
Wear the palm of a statelier calm than rests on waters  
that pass them by.

Yet shall these, when the winds and seas of equal  
days and coequal nights  
Rage, rejoice, and uplift a voice whose sound is even  
as a sword that smites,  
Felt and heard as a doomsman's word from seaward  
reaches to landward heights,

Lift their heart up, and take their part of triumph,  
swollen and strong with rage,  
Rage elate with desire and great with pride that  
tempest and storm assuage ;  
So their chime in the ear of time has rung from age  
to rekindled age.

Fair and dear is the land's face here, and fair man's  
work as a man's may be :  
Dear and fair as the sunbright air is here the record  
that speaks him free ;  
Free by birth of a sacred earth, and regent ever of all  
the sea.

## AN AUTUMN VISION

OCTOBER 31, 1889

*Ζεφύρου γίγαντος αέρα*

## I

Is it Midsummer here in the heavens that illumine  
 October on earth ?  
 Can the year, when his heart is fulfilled with desire  
 of the days of his mirth,  
 Redeem them, recall, or remember ?  
 For a memory recalling the rapture of earth, and  
 redeeming the sky,  
 Shines down from the heights to the depths : will the  
 watchword of dawn be July  
 When to-morrow acclaims November ?  
 The stern salutation of sorrow to death or repentance  
 to shame  
 Was all that the season was wont to accord her of  
 grace or acclaim ;  
 No lightnings of love and of laughter.  
 But here, in the laugh of the loud west wind from  
 around and above,  
 In the flash of the waters beneath him, what sound  
 or what light but of love  
 Rings round him or leaps forth after ?

## II

Wind beloved of earth and sky and sea beyond all  
winds that blow,  
Wind whose might in fight was England's on her  
mightiest warrior day,  
South-west wind, whose breath for her was life, and  
fire to scourge her foe,  
Steel to smite and death to drive him down an  
unreturning way,  
Well-beloved and welcome, sounding all the clarions  
of the sky,  
Rolling all the marshalled waters toward the charge  
that storms the shore,  
We receive, acclaim, salute thee, we who live and  
dream and die,  
As the mightiest mouth of song that ever spake  
acclaimed of yore.  
We that live as they that perish praise thee, lord of  
cloud and wave,  
Wind of winds, clothed on with darkness whence  
as lightning light comes forth,  
We that know thee strong to guard and smite, to  
scatter and to save,  
We to whom the south-west wind is dear as Athens  
held the north.  
He for her waged war as thou for us against all  
powers defiant,  
Fleets full-fraught with storm from Persia, laden  
deep with death from Spain:  
Thee the giant god of song and battle hailed as god  
and giant,  
Yet not his but ours the land is whence thy praise  
should ring and rain;

Rain as rapture shed from song, and ring as trumpets  
blown for battle,  
Sound and sing before thee, loud and glad as leaps  
and sinks the sea :  
Yea, the sea's white steeds are curbed and spurred  
of thee, and pent as cattle,  
Yet they laugh with love and pride to live, subdued  
not save of thee.  
Ears that hear thee hear in heaven the sound of  
widening wings gigantic,  
Eyes that see the cloud-lift westward see thy  
darkening brows divine ;  
Wings whose measure is the limit of the limitless  
Atlantic,  
Brows that bend, and bid the sovereign sea submit  
her soul to thine.

## III

Twelve days since is it---twelve days gone,  
Lord of storm, that a storm-bow shone  
Higher than sweeps thy sublime dark wing,  
Fair as dawn is and sweet like spring ?

Never dawn in the deep wide east  
Spread so splendid and strange a feast,  
Whence the soul as it drank and fed  
Felt such rapture of wonder shed.

Never spring in the wild wood's heart  
Felt such flowers at her footfall start,  
Born of earth, as arose on sight  
Born of heaven and of storm and light. .

Stern and sullen, the grey grim sea  
Swelled and strove as in toils, though free,  
Free as heaven, and as heaven sublime,  
Clear as heaven of the toils of time.

## IV

Suddenly, sheer from the heights to the depths of the  
sky and the sea,  
Sprang from the darkness alive as a vision of life  
to be  
Glory triune and transcendent of colour afar and afire,  
Arching and darkening the darkness with light as of  
dream or desire.  
Heaven, in the depth of its height, shone wistful and  
wan from above :  
Earth from beneath, and the sea, shone stricken and  
breathless with love.  
As a shadow may shine, so shone they ; as ghosts of  
the viewless blest,  
That sleep hath sight of alive in a rapture of sun-  
bright rest,  
The green earth glowed and the grey sky gleamed for  
a wondrous while ;  
And the storm's full frown was crossed by the light  
of its own deep smile.  
As the darkness of thought and of passion is touched  
by the light that gives  
Life deathless as love from the depth of a spirit that  
sees and lives,  
From the soul of a seer and a singer, wherein as a  
scroll unfurled  
Lies open the scripture of light and of darkness, the  
word of the world,

So, shapeless and measureless, lurid as anguish and  
haggard as crime,  
Pale as the front of oblivion and dark as the heart of  
time,  
The wild wan heaven at its height was assailed and  
subdued and made  
More fair than the skies that know not of storm and  
endure not shade.  
The grim sea-swell, grey, sleepless, and sad as a soul  
estranged,  
Shone, smiled, took heart, and was glad of its wrath :  
and the world's face changed.

## v

Up from moorlands northward gleaming  
Even to heaven's transcendent height,  
Clothed with massive cloud, and seeming  
All one fortress reared of night,  
Down to where the deep sea, dreaming  
Angry dreams, lay dark and white,  
White as death and dark as fate,  
Heaving with the strong wind's weight,  
Sad with stormy pride of state,  
One full rainbow shone elate.

Up from inmost memory's dwelling  
Where the light of life abides,  
Where the past finds tongue, foretelling  
Time that comes and grace that guides,  
Power that saves and sways, compelling  
Souls that ebb and flow like tides,  
Shone or seemed to shine and swim  
Through the cloud-surf great and grim,  
Thought's live surge, the soul of him  
By whose light the sun looks dim.

In what synod were they sitting,  
 All the gods and lords of time,  
 Whence they watched as fen-fires flitting  
 Years and names of men sublime,  
 When their counsels found it fitting  
 One should stand where none might climb—  
 None of man begotten, none  
 Born of men beneath the sun  
 Till the race of time be run,  
 Save this heaven-enfranchised one ?

With what rapture of creation  
 Was the soul supernal thrilled,  
 With what pride of adoration  
 Was the world's heart fired and filled,  
 Heaved in heavenward exaltation  
 Higher than hopes or dreams might build,  
 Grave with awe not known while he  
 Was not, mad with glorious glee  
 As the sun-saluted sea,  
 When his hour bade Shakespeare be ?

## VI

There, clear as night beholds her crowning seven,  
 The sea beheld his likeness set in heaven.  
 The shadow of his spirit full in sight  
 Shone : for the shadow of that soul is light.  
 Nor heaven alone bore witness : earth avowed  
 Him present, and acclaimed of storm aloud.  
 From the arching sky to the ageless hills and sea  
 The whole world, visible, audible, was he :  
 Each part of all that wove that wondrous whole  
 The raiment of the presence of his soul.  
 The sun that smote and kissed the dark to death  
 Spake, smiled, and strove, like song's triumphant  
 breath ;

The soundless cloud whose thunderous heart was  
dumb

Swelled, lowered, and shrank to feel its conqueror  
come.

Yet high from heaven its empire vast and vain  
Frowned, and renounced not night's reluctant reign.

The serpentine swift sounds and shapes wherein

The stainless sea mocks earth and death and sin,

Crawls dark as craft, or flashes keen as hate,

Subdued and insubmissive, strong like fate

And weak like man, bore wrathful witness yet

That storms and sins are more than suns that set;

That evil everlasting, girt for strife

Eternal, wars with hope as death with life.

The dark sharp shifting wind that bade the waves

Falter, lose heart, bow down like foes made slaves,

And waxed within more bitter as they bowed,

Baffling the sea, swallowing the sun with cloud,

Devouring fast as fire on earth devours

And hungering hard as frost that feeds on flowers,

Clothed round with fog that reeked as fume from hell,

And darkening with its miscreative spell

Light, glad and keen and splendid as the sword

Whose heft had known Othello's hand its lord,

Spake all the soul that hell drew back to greet

And felt its fire shrink shuddering from his feet.

Far off the darkness darkened, and recoiled,

And neared again, and triumphed: and the coiled

Colourless cloud and sea discoloured grew

Conscious of horror huge as heaven, and knew

Where Goneril's soul made chill and foul the mist,

And all the leprous life in Regan hissed.

Fierce homeless ghosts, rejected of the pit,

From hell to hell of storm fear watched them flit.

About them and before, the dull grey gloom  
Shuddered, and heaven seemed hateful as the tomb  
That shrinks from resurrection ; and from out  
That sullen hell which girt their shades about  
The nether soul that lurks and lowers within  
Man, made of dust and fire and shame and sin,  
Breathed : all the cloud that felt it breathe and blight  
Was blue as plague or black as thunderous night.  
Elect of hell, the children of his hate  
Thronged, as to storm sweet heaven's triumphal  
gate.

The terror of his giving rose and shone  
Imminent : life had put its likeness on.  
But higher than all its horrent height of shade  
Shone sovereign, seen by light itself had made,  
Above the woes of all the world, above  
Life, sin, and death, his myriad-minded love.  
From landward heights whereon the radiance leant  
Full-fraught from heaven, intense and imminent,  
To depths wherein the seething strengths of cloud  
Scarce matched the wrath of waves whereon they  
bowed,  
From homeborn pride and kindling love of home  
To the outer skies and seas of fire and foam,  
From splendour soft as dew that sundawn thrills  
To gloom that shudders round the world it fills,  
From midnights murmuring round Titania's ear  
To midnights maddening round the rage of Lear,  
The wonder woven of storm and sun became  
One with the light that lightens from his name.  
The music moving on the sea that felt  
The storm-wind even as snows of springtide melt  
Was blithe as Ariel's hand or voice might make  
And bid all grief die gladly for its sake.

And there the soul alive in ear and eye  
That watched the wonders of an hour pass by  
Saw brighter than all stars that heaven inspheres  
The silent splendour of Cordelia's tears,  
Felt in the whispers of the quickening wind  
The radiance of the laugh of Rosalind,  
And heard, in sounds that melt the souls of men  
With love of love, the tune of Imogen.

## VII

For the strong north-east is not strong to subdue  
and to slay the divine south-west,  
And the darkness is less than the light that it  
darkens, and dies in reluctant rest.  
It hovers and hangs on the labouring and trembling  
ascent of the dawn from the deep,  
Till the sun's eye quicken the world and the waters,  
and smite it again into sleep.  
Night, holy and starry, the fostress of souls, with the  
fragrance of heaven in her breath,  
Subdues with the sense of her godhead the forces and  
mysteries of sorrow and death.  
Eternal as dawn's is the comfort she gives : but the  
mist that beleaguers and slays  
Comes, passes, and is not : the strength of it withers,  
appalled or assuaged by the day's.  
Faith, haggard as Fear that had borne her, and dark  
as the sire that begat her, Despair,  
Held rule on the soul of the world and the song of it  
saddening through ages that were ;  
Dim centuries that darkened and brightened and  
darkened again, and the soul of their song  
Was great as their grief, and sublime as their suffer-  
ing, and strong as their sorrows were strong.

It knew not, it saw not, but shadows triune, and  
evoked by the strength of their spell  
Dark hell, and the mountain of anguish, and heaven  
that was hollower and harder than hell.  
These are not : the womb of the darkness that bare  
them rejects them, and knows them no more :  
Thought, fettered in misery and iron, revives in the  
light that it lived in of yore.  
For the soul that is wisdom and freedom, the spirit  
of England redeemed from her past,  
Speaks life through the lips of the master and  
lord of her children, the first and the last.  
Thought, touched by his hand and redeemed by his  
breath, sees, hears, and accepts from above  
The limitless lightnings of vision and passion, the  
measureless music of love.

## A SWIMMER'S DREAM

NOVEMBER 4, 1889

*Somno mollior unda*

1

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,  
 Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.  
 Love's own self was the deep sea's daughter,  
 Fair and flawless from face to feet,  
 Hailed of all when the world was golden,  
 Loved of lovers whose names beholden  
 Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden  
 Days more glad than their flight was fleet.

So they sang : but for men that love her,  
 Souls that hear not her word in vain,  
 Earth beside her and heaven above her  
 Seem but shadows that wax and wane.  
 Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,  
 Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,  
 Blither than spring's when her flowerful tresses  
 Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish  
    Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,  
Sighs for love of the life they cherish,  
    Laughs to know that it lives and dies,  
Dies for joy of its life, and lives  
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—  
Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives  
    Change that bids it subside and rise.

## II

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,  
    Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,  
Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering  
    Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.  
Dawn and even and noon are one,  
Veiled with vapour and void of sun ;  
Nought in sight or in fancied hearing  
    Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas glimmer,  
    Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,  
As a dream's where darkness and light seem dimmer,  
    Touched by dawn or subdued by night.  
The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,  
Swings the rollers to westward, clad  
With lustrous shadow that lures the swimmer,  
    Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,  
    Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,  
Fill the world of the skies whereunder  
    Heaves and quivers and pants aloud

All the world of the waters, hoary  
Now, but clothed with its own live glory,  
That mates the lightning and mocks the thunder  
With light more living and word more proud.

## III

Far off westward, whither sets the sounding strife,  
Strife more sweet than peace, of shoreless waves  
whose glee  
Scorns the shore and loves the wind that leaves  
them free,  
Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair as life,  
Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters crowd,  
Fast as autumn days toward winter : yet it seems  
Here that autumn wanes not, here that woods and  
streams  
Lose not heart and change not likeness, chilled and  
bowed,  
Warped and wrinkled : here the days are fair as  
dreams.

## IV

O russet-robed November,  
What ails thee so to smile ?  
Chill August, pale September,  
Endured a woful while,  
And fell as falls an ember  
From forth a flameless pile :  
But golden-girt November  
Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning  
As wanes the morning moon,  
Here falling, here refraining,  
Outbraves the pride of June  
With statelier semblance, feigning  
No fear lest death be soon :  
As though the woods thus waning  
Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken  
By grey December's breath,  
These lordlier growths that sicken  
And die for fear of death  
Should feel the sense requicken  
That hears what springtide saith  
And thrills for love, spring-stricken  
And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter  
That stings and spurs thy sea  
Doth yet but feed and feast her  
With glowing sense of glee :  
Calm chained her, storm released her,  
And storm's glad voice was he :  
South-wester or north-easter,  
Thy winds rejoice the sea.

## V

A dream, a dream is it all—the season,  
The sky, the water, the wind, the shore ?  
A day-born dream of divine unreason,  
A marvel moulded of sleep —no more ?

For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while cleaving  
 Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving  
 Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving  
 Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,  
 A peace more happy than lives on land,  
 Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure  
 The dreaming head and the steering hand.  
 I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,  
 The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,  
 And close mine eyes for delight past measure,  
 And wish the wheel of the world would stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would capture  
 Falls as from heaven that its light feet climb,  
 So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture  
 Was felt that soothed me with sense of home.  
 To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—  
 Such joy the vision of man saw never ;  
 For here too soon will a dark day sever  
 The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer  
 At once and brighter than dreams that flee,  
 The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer  
 Abides, remembered as truth may be.  
 Not all the joy and not all the glory  
 Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary ;  
 For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,  
 And here to south of them swells the sea.

## GRACE DARLING

TAKE, O star of all our seas, from not an alien hand,

Homage paid of song bowed down before thy glory's face,

Thou the living light of all our lovely stormy strand,

Thou the brave north-country's very glory of glories, Grace.

Loud and dark about the lighthouse rings and glares the night ;

Glares with foam-lit gloom and darkling fire of storm and spray,

Rings with roar of winds in chase and rage of waves in flight,

Howls and hisses as with mouths of snakes and wolves at bay.

Scarce the cliffs of the islets, scarce the walls of Joyous Gard,

Flash to sight between the deadlier lightnings of the sea :

Storm is lord and master of a midnight evil-starred, Nor may sight or fear discern what evil stars may be.

Dark as death and white as snow the sea-swell  
scowls and shines,  
Heaves and yearns and pants for prey, from raven-  
ing lip to lip,  
Strong in rage of rapturous anguish, lines on hurt-  
ling lines,  
Ranks on charging ranks, that break and rend the  
battling ship.  
All the night is mad and murderous : who shall front  
the night ?  
Not the prow that labours, helpless as a storm-  
blown leaf,  
Where the rocks and waters, darkling depth and  
beetling height,  
Rage with wave on shattering wave and thundering  
reef on reef.  
Death is fallen upon the prisoners there of darkness,  
bound  
Like as thralls with links of iron fast in bonds of  
doom ;  
How shall any way to break the bands of death be  
found,  
Any hand avail to pluck them from that raging  
tomb ?  
All the night is great with child of death : no stars  
above  
Show them hope in heaven, no lights from shores  
ward help on earth.  
Is there help or hope to seaward, is there help in  
love,  
Hope in pity, where the ravening hounds of storm  
make mirth ?  
Where the light but shows the naked eyeless face of  
Death

Nearer, laughing dumb and grim across the loud  
live storm ?

Not in human heart or hand or speech of human  
breath,

Surely, nor in saviours found of mortal face or  
form.

Yet below the light, between the reefs, a skiff shot  
out

Seems a sea-bird fain to breast and brave the strait  
fierce pass

Whence the channelled roar of waters driven in  
raging rout,

Pent and pressed and maddened, speaks their mon-  
strous might and mass.

Thunder heaves and howls about them, lightning  
leaps and flashes,

Hard at hand, not high in heaven, but close  
between the walls

Heaped and hollowed of the storms of old, whence  
reels and crashes

All the rage of all the unbaffled wave that breaks  
and falls.

Who shall thwart the madness and the gladness of  
it, laden

Full with heavy fate, and joyous as the birds that  
whirl ?

Nought in heaven or earth, if not one mortal-moulded  
maiden,

Nought if not the soul that glorifies a northland  
girl.

Not the rocks that break may baffle, not the reefs that  
thwart

Stay the ravenous rapture of the waves that crowd  
and leap ;

Scarce their flashing laughter shows the hunger of  
their heart,  
Scarce their lion-throated roar the wrath at heart  
they keep.  
Child and man and woman in the grasp of death  
clenched fast  
Tremble, clothed with darkness round about, and  
scarce draw breath,  
Scarce lift eyes up toward the light that saves not,  
scarce may cast  
Thought or prayer up, caught and trammelled in  
the snare of death.  
Not as sea-mews cling and laugh or sun their plumes  
and sleep  
Cling and cower the wild night's waifs of shipwreck,  
blind with fear,  
Where the fierce reef scarce yields foothold that a bird  
might keep,  
And the clamorous darkness deadens eye and  
deafens ear.  
Yet beyond their helpless hearing, out of hopeless  
sight,  
Saviours, armed and girt upon with strength of  
heart, fare forth,  
Sire and daughter, hand on oar and face against the  
night,  
Maid and man whose names are beacons ever to  
the North.  
Nearer now ; but all the madness of the storming  
surf  
Hounds and roars them back ; but roars and hounds  
them back in vain :  
As a pleasure-skiff may graze the lake-embanking  
turf,

So the boat that bears them grates the rock where-  
toward they strain.  
Dawn as fierce and haggard as the face of night  
scarce guides  
Toward the cries that rent and clove the darkness,  
crying for aid,  
Hours on hours, across the engorged reluctance of the  
tides,  
Sire and daughter, high-souled man and mightier-  
hearted maid.  
Not the bravest land that ever breasted war's grim  
sea,  
Hurled her foes back harried on the lowlands whence  
they came,  
Held her own and smote her smiters down, while such  
durst be,  
Shining northward, shining southward, as the  
aurorean flame,  
Not our mother, not Northumberland, brought ever  
forth,  
Though no southern shore may match the sons that  
kiss her mouth,  
Children worthier all the birthright given of the ardent  
north  
Where the fire of hearts outburns the suns that fire  
the south.  
Even such fire was this that lit them, not from lower-  
ing skies  
Where the darkling dawn flagged, stricken in the  
sun's own shrine,  
Down the gulf of storm subsiding, till their earnest  
eyes  
Find the relics of the ravening night that spared  
but nine.

Life by life the man redeems them, head by storm-worn head,

While the girl's hand stays the boat whereof the waves are fain :

Ah, but woe for one, the mother clasping fast her dead !

Happier, had the surges slain her with her children slain.

Back they bear, and bring between them safe the woful nine,

Where above the ravenous Hawkers fixed at watch for prey

Storm and calm behold the Longstone's towering signal shine

Now as when that labouring night brought forth a shuddering day.

Now as then, though like the hounds of storm against her snarling

All the clamorous years between us storm down many a fame,

As our sires beheld before us we behold Grace Darling

Crowned and throned our queen, and as they hailed we hail her name.

Nay, not ours alone, her kinsfolk born, though chiefiest ours,

East and west and south acclaim her queen of England's maids,

Star more sweet than all their stars and flower than all their flowers,

Higher in heaven and earth than star than sets or flower that fades.

How should land or sea that nurtured her forget, or love

Hold not fast her fame for us while aught is borne  
in mind ?

Land and sea beneath us, sun and moon and stars  
above,

Bear the bright soul witness, seen of all but souls  
born blind.

Stars and moon and sun may wax and wane, subside  
and rise,

Age on age as flake on flake of showering snows be  
shed :

Not till earth be sunless, not till death strike blind  
the skies,

May the deathless love that waits on deathless  
deeds be dead.

Years on years have withered since beside the hearth  
once thine

I, too young to have seen thee, touched thy father's  
hallowed hand :

Thee and him shall all men see for ever, stars that  
shine

While the sea that spared thee girds and glorifies  
the land.

## LOCH TORRIDON

To E. H.

THE dawn of night more fair than morning rose,  
Stars hurrying forth on stars, as snows on snows  
Haste when the wind and winter bid them speed.  
Vague miles of moorland road behind us lay  
Scarce traversed ere the day  
Sank, and the sun forsook us at our need,  
Belated. Where we thought to have rested, rest  
Was none ; for soft Maree's dim quivering breast,  
Bound round with gracious inland girth of green  
And fearless of the wild wave-wandering West,  
Shone shelterless for strangers ; and unseen  
The goal before us lay  
Of all our blithe and strange and strenuous day.

For when the northering road faced westward—when  
The dark sharp sudden gorge dropped seaward—  
then,  
Beneath the stars, between the steeps, the track  
We followed, lighted not of moon or sun,  
And plunging whither none

Might guess, while heaven and earth were hoar and black,  
Seemed even the dim still pass whence none turns back :  
And through the twilight leftward of the way,  
And down the dark, with many a laugh and leap,  
The light blithe hill-streams shone from scaur to steep  
In glittering pride of play ;  
And ever while the night grew great and deep  
We felt but saw not what the hills would keep  
Sacred awhile from sense of moon or star ;  
And full and far  
Beneath us, sweet and strange as heaven may be,  
The sea.

The very sea : no mountain-moulded lake  
Whose fluctuant shapeliness is fain to take  
Shape from the steadfast shore that rules it round,  
And only from the storms a casual sound :  
The sea, that harbours in her heart sublime  
The supreme heart of music deep as time,  
And in her spirit strong  
The spirit of all imaginable song.

Not a whisper or lisp from the waters : the skies  
were not silenter. Peace  
Was between them ; a passionless rapture of respite  
as soft as release.  
Not a sound, but a sense that possessed and per-  
vaded with patient delight  
The soul and the body, clothed round with the com-  
fort of limitless night.

Night infinite, living, adorable, loved of the land and  
the sea :  
Night, mother of mercies, who saith to the spirits in  
prison, Be free.  
And softer than dewfall, and kindlier than starlight,  
and keener than wine,  
Came round us the fragrance of waters, the life of  
the breath of the brine.  
We saw not, we heard not, the face or the voice of  
the waters : we knew  
By the darkling delight of the wind as the sense of  
the sea in it grew,  
By the pulse of the darkness about us enkindled and  
quickened, that here,  
Unseen and unheard of us, surely the goal we had  
faith in was near.  
A silence diviner than music, a darkness diviner than  
light,  
Fulfilled as from heaven with a measureless comfort  
the measure of night.

But never a roof for shelter  
And never a sign for guide  
Rose doubtful or visible : only  
And hardly and gladly we heard  
The soft waves whisper and welter,  
Subdued, and allured to subside,  
By the mild night's magic : the lonely  
Sweet silence was soothed, not stirred,  
By the noiseless noise of the gleaming  
Glad ripples, that played and sighed,  
Kissed, laughed, recoiled, and relented,  
Whispered, flickered, and fled.

No season was this for dreaming  
How oft, with a stormier tide,  
Had the wrath of the winds been vented  
On sons of the tribes long dead :  
The tribes whom time, and the changes  
Of things, and the stress of doom,  
Have erased and effaced ; forgotten  
As wrecks or weeds of the shore  
In sight of the stern hill-ranges  
That hardly may change their gloom  
When the fruits of the years wax rotten  
And the seed of them springs no more.  
For the dim strait footway dividing  
The waters that breathed below  
Led safe to the kindest of shelters  
That ever awoke into light :  
And still in remembrance abiding  
Broods over the stars that glow  
And the water that eddies and welters  
The passionate peace of the night.

All night long; in the world of sleep,  
Skies and waters were soft and deep :  
Shadow clothed them, and silence made  
Soundless music of dream and shade :  
All above us, the livelong night,  
Shadow, kindled with sense of light ;  
All around us, the brief night long,  
Silence, laden with sense of song.  
Stars and mountains without, we knew,  
Watched and waited, the soft night through  
All unseen, but divined and dear,  
Thrilled the touch of the sea's breath near :

All unheard, but alive like sound,  
Throbbed the sense of the sea's life round :  
Round us, near us, in depth and height,  
Soft as darkness and keen as light.

And the dawn leapt in at my casement : and there,  
as I rose, at my feet  
No waves of the landlocked waters, no lake sub-  
missive and sweet,  
Soft slave of the lordly seasons, whose breath may  
loose it or freeze ;  
But to left and to right and ahead was the ripple  
whose pulse is the sea's.  
From the gorge we had travelled by starlight the  
sunrise, winged and aflame,  
Shone large on the live wide wavelets that shuddered  
with joy as it came ;  
As it came and caressed and possessed them, till  
panting and laughing with light  
From mountain to mountain the water was kindled  
and stung to delight.  
And the grey gaunt heights that embraced and con-  
strained and compelled it were glad,  
And the rampart of rock, stark naked, that thwarted  
and barred it, was clad  
With a stern grey splendour of sunrise : and scarce  
had I sprung to the sea  
When the dawn and the water were wedded, the hills  
and the sky set free.  
The chain of the night was broken : the waves that  
embraced me and smiled  
And flickered and fawned in the sunlight, alive, un-  
afraid, undefiled,

Were sweeter to swim in than air, though fulfilled  
with the mounting morn,  
Could be for the birds whose triumph rejoiced that a  
day was born.

And a day was arisen indeed for us. Years and the  
changes of years  
Clothed round with their joys and their sorrows, and  
dead as their hopes and their fears,  
Lie noteless and nameless, unlit by remembrance or  
record of days  
Worth wonder or memory, or cursing or blessing, or  
passion or praise,  
Between us who live and forget not, but yearn with  
delight in it yet,  
And the day we forget not, and never may live and  
may think to forget.  
And the years that were kindlier and fairer, and  
kindled with pleasures as keen,  
Have eclipsed not with lights or with shadows the  
light on the face of it seen.  
For softly and surely, as nearer the boat that we  
gazed from drew,  
The face of the precipice opened and bade us as birds  
pass through,  
And the bark shot sheer to the sea through the strait  
of the sharp steep cleft,  
The portal that opens with imminent rampires to  
right and to left,  
Sublime as the sky they darken and strange as a  
spell-struck dream,  
On the world unconfined of the mountains, the reign  
of the sea supreme,

The kingdom of westward waters, wherein when we  
swam we knew  
The waves that we clove were boundless, the wind  
on our brows that blew  
Had swept no land and no lake, and had warred not  
on tower or on tree,  
But came on us hard out of heaven, and alive with  
the soul of the sea.

## THE PALACE OF PAN

INSCRIBED TO MY MOTHER

SEPTEMBER, all glorious with gold, as a king  
 In the radiance of triumph attired,  
 Outlightening the summer, outsweetening the spring,  
 Broods wide on the woodlands with limitless wing,  
 A presence of all men desired.

Far eastward and westward the sun-coloured lands  
 Smile warm as the light on them smiles ;  
 And statelier than temples upbuilted with hands,  
 Tall column by column, the sanctuary stands  
 Of the pine-forest's infinite aisles.

Mute worship, too fervent for praise or for prayer,  
 Possesses the spirit with peace,  
 Fulfilled with the breath of the luminous air,  
 The fragrance, the silence, the shadows as fair  
 As the rays that recede or increase.

Ridged pillars that redden aloft and aloof,  
 With never a branch for a nest,  
 Sustain the sublime indivisible roof,  
 To the storm and the sun in his majesty proof,  
 And awful as waters at rest.

Man's hand hath not measured the height of them ;  
thought

May measure not, awe may not know ;  
In its shadow the woofs of the woodland are  
wrought ;  
As a bird is the sun in the toils of them caught,  
And the flakes of it scattered as snow.

As the shreds of a plumage of gold on the ground  
The sun-flakes by multitudes lie,  
Shed loose as the petals of roses discrowned  
On the floors of the forest engilt and embrowned  
And reddened afar and anigh.

Dim centuries with darkling inscrutable hands  
Have reared and secluded the shrine  
For gods that we know not, and kindled as brands  
On the altar the years that are dust, and their sands  
Time's glass has forgotten for sign.

A temple whose transepts are measured by miles,  
Whose chancel has morning for priest,  
Whose floor-work the foot of no spoiler defiles,  
Whose musical silence no music beguiles,  
No festivals limit its feast.

The noon's ministration, the night's and the dawn's,  
Conceals not, reveals not for man,  
On the slopes of the herbless and blossomless lawns,  
Some track of a nymph's or some trail of a faun's  
To the place of the slumber of Pan.

Thought, kindled and quickened by worship and  
wonder  
To rapture too sacred for fear

On the ways that unite or divide them in sunder,  
Alone may discern if about them or under  
Be token or trace of him here.

With passionate awe that is deeper than panic  
The spirit subdued and unshaken  
Takes heed of the godhead terrene and Titanic  
Whose footfall is felt on the breach of volcanic  
Sharp steeps that their fire has forsaken.

By a spell more serene than the dim necromantic  
Dead charms of the past and the night,  
Or the terror that lurked in the noon to make frantic  
Where Etna takes shape from the limbs of gigantic  
Dead gods disanointed of might,

The spirit made one with the spirit whose breath  
Makes noon in the woodland sublime  
Abides as entranced in a presence that saith  
Things loftier than life and serener than death,  
Triumphant and silent as time.

PINE RIDGE: *September 1893*

## A YEAR'S CAROLS

## JANUARY

HAIL, January, that bearest here  
On snowbright breasts the babe-faced year  
That weeps and trembles to be born.  
Hail, maid and mother, strong and bright,  
Hooded and cloaked and shod with white,  
Whose eyes are stars that match the morn.  
Thy forehead braves the storm's bent bow,  
Thy feet enkindle stars of snow.

## FEBRUARY

Wan February with weeping cheer,  
Whose cold hand guides the youngling year  
Down misty roads of mire and rime,  
Before thy pale and fitful face  
The shrill wind shifts the clouds apace  
Through skies the morning scarce may climb.  
Thine eyes are thick with heavy tears,  
But lit with hopes that light the year's

## MARCH

Hail, happy March, whose foot on earth  
Rings as the blast of martial mirth  
When trumpets fire men's hearts for fray.  
No race of wild things winged or finned  
May match the might that wings thy wind  
Through air and sea, through scud and spray.  
Strong joy and thou were powers twin-born  
Of tempest and the towering morn.

## APRIL

Crowned April, king whose kiss bade earth  
Bring forth to time her lordliest birth  
When Shakespeare from thy lips drew breath  
And laughed to hold in one soft hand  
A spell that bade the world's wheel stand,  
And power on life, and power on death,  
With quiring suns and sunbright showers  
Praise him, the flower of all thy flowers.

## MAY

Hail, May, whose bark puts forth full-sailed  
For summer ; May, whom Chaucer hailed  
With all his happy might of heart,  
And gave thy rosebright daisy-tips  
Strange fragrance from his amorous lips  
That still thine own breath seems to part  
And sweeten till each word they say  
Is even a flower of flowering May.

## JUNE

Strong June, superb, serene, elate  
With conscience of thy sovereign state  
Untouched of thunder, though the storm  
Scathe here and there thy shuddering skies  
And bid its lightning cross thine eyes  
With fire, thy golden hours inform  
Earth and the souls of men with life  
That brings forth peace from shining strife.

## JULY

Hail, proud July, whose fervent mouth  
Bids even be morn and north be south  
By grace and gospel of thy word,  
Whence all the splendour of the sea  
Lies breathless with delight in thee  
And marvel at the music heard  
From the ardent silent lips of noon  
And midnight's rapturous plenilune.

## AUGUST

Great August, lord of golden lands,  
Whose lordly joy through seas and strands  
And all the red-ripe heart of earth  
Strikes passion deep as life, and stills  
The folded vales and folding hills  
With gladness too divine for mirth,  
The gracious glories of thine eyes  
Make night a noon where darkness dies.

## SEPTEMBER

Hail, kind September, friend whose grace  
Renews the bland year's bounteous face  
With largess given of corn and wine  
Through many a land that laughs with love  
Of thee and all the heaven above,  
More fruitful found than all save thine  
Whose skies fulfil with strenuous cheer  
The fervent fields that knew thee near.

## OCTOBER

October of the tawny crown,  
Whose heavy-laden hands drop down  
Blessing, the bounties of thy breath  
And mildness of thy mellowing might  
Fill earth and heaven with love and light  
Too sweet for fear to dream of death  
Or memory, while thy joy lives yet,  
To know what joy would fain forget.

## NOVEMBER

Hail, soft November, though thy pale  
Sad smile rebuke the words that hail  
Thy sorrow with no sorrowing words  
Or gratulate thy grief with song  
Less bitter than the winds that wrong  
Thy withering woodlands, where the birds  
Keep hardly heart to sing or see  
How fair thy faint wan face may be.

## DECEMBER

December, thou whose hallowing hands  
On shuddering seas and hardening lands  
    Set as a sacramental sign  
The seal of Christmas felt on earth  
As witness toward a new year's birth  
    Whose promise makes thy death divine,  
The crowning joy that comes of thee  
Makes glad all grief on land or sea.

## ENGLAND: AN ODE

## I

SEA and strand, and a lordlier land than sea-tides  
 rolling and rising sun  
 Clasp and lighten in climes that brighten with day  
 when day that was here is done,  
 Call aloud on their children, proud with trust that  
 future and past are one.

Far and near from the swan's nest here the storm-  
 birds bred of her fair white breast,  
 Sons whose home was the sea-wave's foam, have  
 borne the fame of her east and west ;  
 North and south has the storm-wind's mouth rung  
 praise of England and England's quest.

Fame, wherever her flag flew, never forbore to fly  
 with an equal wing :  
 France and Spain with their warrior train bowed  
 down before her as thrall to king ;  
 India knelt at her feet, and felt her sway more fruit-  
 ful of life than spring.

Darkness round them as iron bound fell off from  
 races of elder name.

Slain at sight of her eyes, whose light bids freedom  
lighten and burn as flame ;  
Night endures not the touch that cures of kingship  
tyrants, and slaves of shame.

All the terror of time, where error and fear were lords  
of a world of slaves,  
Age on age in resurgent rage and anguish darkening  
as waves on waves,  
Fell or fled from a face that shed such grace as  
quickens the dust of graves.

Things of night at her glance took flight : the  
strengths of darkness recoiled and sank :  
Sank the fires of the murderous pyres whereon wild  
agony writhed and shrank :  
Rose the light of the reign of right from gulfs of  
years that the darkness drank.

Yet the might of her wings in flight, whence glory  
lightens and music rings,  
Loud and bright as the dawn's, shall smite and still  
the discord of evil things,  
Yet not slain by her radiant reign, but darkened now  
by her sail-stretched wings.

## II

Music made of change and conquest, glory born of  
evil slain,  
Stilled the discord, slew the darkness, bade the lights  
of tempest wane,  
Where the deathless dawn of England rose in sign  
that right should reign.

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and blind with  
blood and lust,  
Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed, and slaves  
allowed it just,  
Rose as England's light on Asia rose, and smote  
them down to dust.

Justice bright as mercy, mercy girt by justice with  
her sword,  
Smote and saved and raised and ruined, till the  
tyrant-ridden horde  
Saw the lightning fade from heaven and knew the sun  
for God and lord.

Where the footfall sounds of England, where the  
smile of England shines,  
Rings the tread and laughs the face of freedom, fair  
as hope divines  
Days to be, more brave than ours and lit by lordlier  
stars for signs.

All our past acclaims our future : Shakespeare's  
voice and Nelson's hand,  
Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in this our  
chosen and chainless land,  
Bear us witness : come the world against her,  
England yet shall stand.

Earth and sea bear England witness if he lied who  
said it ; he  
Whom the winds that ward her, waves that clasp,  
and herb and flower and tree  
Fed with English dews and sunbeams, hail as more  
than man may be.

No man ever spake as he that bade our England be  
but true,  
Keep but faith with England fast and firm, and none  
should bid her rue ;  
None may speak as he : but all may know the sign  
that Shakespeare knew.

## III

From the springs of the dawn, from the depths of the  
noon, from the heights of the night that shine,  
Hope, faith, and remembrance of glory that found  
but in England her throne and her shrine,  
Speak louder than song may proclaim them, that here  
is the seal of them set for a sign.

And loud as the sea's voice thunders applause of the  
land that is one with the sea  
Speaks Time in the ear of the people that never at  
heart was not inly free  
The word of command that assures us of life, if we  
will but that life shall be ;

If the race that is first of the races of men who behold  
unashamed the sun  
Stand fast and forget not the sign that is given of  
the years and the wars that are done,  
The token that all who are born of its blood should  
in heart as in blood be one.

The word of remembrance that lightens as fire from  
the steeps of the storm-lit past

Bids only the faith of our fathers endure in us, firm  
as they held it fast :

That the glory which was from the first upon England  
alone may endure to the last.

That the love and the hate may change not, the faith  
may not fade, nor the wrath nor scorn,

That shines for her sons and that burns for her foe-  
men as fire of the night or the morn :

That the births of her womb may forget not the sign  
of the glory wherein they were born.

A light that is more than the sunlight, an air that is  
brighter than morning's breath,

Clothes England about as the strong sea clasps her,  
and answers the word that it saith ;

The word that assures her of life if she change not,  
and choose not the ways of death.

Change darkens and lightens around her, alternate  
in hope and in fear to be :

Hope knows not if fear speak truth, nor fear whether  
hope be not blind as she :

But the sun is in heaven that beholds her immortal,  
and girdled with life by the sea.

## ETON : AN ODE

FOR THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGE

## I

FOUR hundred summers and fifty have shone on the  
meadows of Thames and died  
Since Eton arose in an age that was darkness, and  
shone by his radiant side  
As a star that the spell of a wise man's word bade  
live and ascend and abide.

And ever as time's flow brightened, a river more dark  
than the storm-clothed sea,  
And age upon age rose fairer and larger in promise of  
hope set free,  
With England Eton her child kept pace as a fostress  
of men to be.

And ever as earth waxed wiser, and softer the beat-  
ing of time's wide wings,  
Since fate fell dark on her father, most hapless and  
gentlest of star-crossed kings,  
Her praise has increased as the chant of the dawn  
that the choir of the noon outsings.

## II

Storm and cloud in the skies were loud, and lightning mocked at the blind sun's light ;  
War and woe on the land below shed heavier shadow than falls from night ;  
Dark was earth at her dawn of birth as here her record of praise is bright.

Clear and fair through her morning air the light first laugh of the sunlit stage  
Rose and rang as a fount that sprang from depths yet dark with a spent storm's rage,  
Loud and glad as a boy's, and bade the sunrise open on Shakespeare's age.

Lords of state and of war, whom fate found strong in battle, in counsel strong,  
Here, ere fate had approved them great, abode their season, and thought not long :  
Here too first was the lark's note nursed that filled and flooded the skies with song.

## III

Shelley, lyric lord of England's lordliest singers, here first heard  
Ring from lips of poets crowned and dead the Promethean word  
Whence his soul took fire, and power to outsoar the sunward-soaring bird.

Still the reaches of the river, still the light on field  
and hill,  
Still the memories held aloft as lamps for hope's  
young fire to fill,  
Shine, and while the light of England lives shall  
shine for England still.

When four hundred more and fifty years have risen  
and shone and set,  
Bright with names that men remember, loud with  
names that men forget,  
Haply here shall Eton's record be what England  
finds it yet.

## THE UNION

## I

THREE in one, but one in three,  
 God, who girt her with the sea,  
 Bade our Commonweal to be :

Nought, if now not one.  
 Though fraud and fear would sever  
 The bond assured for ever,  
 Their shameful strength shall never  
 Undo what heaven has done.

## II

South and North and West and East  
 Watch the ravens flock to feast,  
 Dense as round some death-struck beast.

Black as night is black.  
 Stand fast as faith together  
 In stress of treacherous weather  
 When hounds and wolves break tether  
 And Treason guides the pack.

## III

Lovelier than thy seas are strong,  
 Glorious Ireland, sword and song  
 Gird and crown thee : none may wrong,  
 Save thy sons alone.

The sea that laughs around us  
Hath sundered not but bound us :  
The sun's first rising found us  
    Throned on its equal throne.

## IV

North and South and East and West  
All true hearts that wish thee best  
Beat one tune and own one quest,  
    Staunch and sure as steel.  
God guard from dark disunion  
Our threefold State's communion,  
God save the loyal Union,  
    The royal Commonweal !

## EAST TO WEST

SUNSET smiles on sunrise : east and west are one,  
 Face to face in heaven before the sovereign sun.  
 From the springs of the dawn everlasting a glory  
     renews and transfigures the west,  
 From the depths of the sunset a light as of morning  
     enkindles the broad sea's breast,  
 And the lands and the skies and the waters are glad  
     of the day's and the night's work done.

Child of dawn, and regent on the world-wide sea,  
 England smiles on Europe, fair as dawn and free.  
 Not the waters that gird her are purer, nor mightier  
     the winds that her waters know.  
 But America, daughter and sister of England, is  
     praised of them, far as they flow :  
 Atlantic responds to Pacific the praise of her days  
     that have been and shall be.

So from England westward let the watchword fly,  
 So for England eastward let the seas reply ;  
 Praise, honour, and love everlasting be sent on the  
     wind's wings, westward and east,  
 That the pride of the past and the pride of the future  
     may mingle as friends at feast,  
 And the sons of the lords of the world-wide seas be  
     one till the world's life die.

INSCRIPTIONS  
FOR THE FOUR SIDES OF A PEDESTAL

## I

MARLOWE, the father of the sons of song  
 Whose praise is England's crowning praise, above  
 All glories else that crown her, sweet and strong  
 As England, clothed with light and fire of love,  
 And girt with might of passion, thought, and trust,  
 Stands here in spirit, sleeps not here in dust.

## II

Marlowe, a star too sovereign, too superb,  
 To fade when heaven took fire from Shakespeare's  
 light,  
 A soul that knew but song's triumphal curb  
 And love's triumphant bondage, holds of right  
 His pride of place, who first in place and time  
 Made England's voice as England's heart sublime.

## III

Marlowe bade England live in living song :  
 The light he lifted up lit Shakespeare's way :  
 He spake, and life sprang forth in music, strong  
 As fire or lightning, sweet as dawn of day.  
 Song was a dream where day took night to wife :  
 " Let there be life," he said : and there was life.

## IV

Marlowe of all our fathers first beheld  
    Beyond the tidal ebb and flow of things  
The tideless depth and height of souls, impelled  
    By thought or passion, borne on waves or wings,  
Beyond all flight or sight but song's : and he  
    First gave our song a sound that matched our sea.

## ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD BURTON

NIGHT or light is it now, wherein  
Sleeps, shut out from the wild world's din,

Wakes, alive with a life more clear,  
One who found not on earth his kin ?

Sleep were sweet for awhile, were dear  
Surely to souls that were heartless here,

Souls that faltered and flagged and fell,  
Soft of spirit and faint of cheer.

A living soul that had strength to quell  
Hope the spectre and fear the spell,

Clear-eyed, content with a scorn sublime  
And a faith superb, can it fare not well ?

Life, the shadow of wide-winged time,  
Cast from the wings that change as they climb,

Life may vanish in death, and seem  
Less than the promise of last year's prime.

But not for us is the past a dream  
Wherfrom, as light from a clouded stream,  
Faith fades and shivers and ebbs away,  
Faint as the moon if the sundawn gleam.

Faith, whose eyes in the low last ray  
 Watch the fire that renews the day,  
 Faith which lives in the living past,  
 Rock-rooted, swerves not as weeds that sway.

As trees that stand in the storm-wind fast  
 She stands, unsmitten of death's keen blast,  
 With strong remembrance of sunbright spring  
 Alive at heart to the lifeless last.

Night, she knows, may in no wise cling  
 To a soul that sinks not and droops not wing,  
 A sun that sets not in death's false night  
 Whose kingdom finds him not thrall but king.

Souls there are that for soul's affright  
 Bow down and cower in the sun's glad sight,  
 Clothed round with faith that is one with fear,  
 And dark with doubt of the live world's light.

But him we hailed from afar or near  
 As boldest born of the bravest here  
 And loved as brightest of souls that eyed  
 Life, time, and death with unchangeful cheer,

A wider soul than the world was wide,  
 Whose praise made love of him one with pride,  
 What part has death or has time in him,  
 Who rode life's lists as a god might ride ?

While England sees not her old praise dim,  
 While still her stars through the world's night swim,  
 A fame outshining her Raleigh's fame,  
 A light that lightens her loud sea's rim,

Shall shine and sound as her sons proclaim  
The pride that kindles at Burton's name.

And joy shall exalt their pride to be  
The same in birth if in soul the same.

But we that yearn for a friend's face—we  
Who lack the light that on earth was he—

Mourn, though the light be a quenchless flame  
That shines as dawn on a tideless sea.

## ELEGY

1869-1891

AUVERGNE, Auvergne, O wild and woful land,  
O glorious land and gracious, white as gleam  
The stairs of heaven, black as a flameless brand,  
Strange even as life, and stranger than a dream,

Could earth remember man, whose eyes made bright  
The splendour of her beauty, lit by day  
Or soothed and softened and redeemed by night,  
Wouldst thou not know what light has passed  
away?

Wouldst thou not know whom England, whom the  
world,  
Mourns ? For the world whose wildest ways he trod,  
And smiled their dangers down that coiled and curled  
Against him, knows him now less man than god.

Our demigod of daring, keenest-eyed  
To read and deepest read in earth's dim things,  
A spirit now whose body of death has died  
And left it mightier yet in eyes and wings,

The sovereign seeker of the world, who now  
Hath sought what world the light of death may  
show,  
Hailed once with me the crowns that load thy brow,  
Crags dark as midnight, columns bright as snow.

Thy steep small Siena, splendid and content  
As shines the mightier city's Tuscan pride  
Which here its face reflects in radiance, pent  
By narrower bounds from towering side to side,  
  
Set fast between the ridged and foamless waves  
Of earth more fierce and fluctuant than the sea,  
The fearless town of towers that hails and braves  
The heights that gird, the sun that brands Le Puy ;

The huddled churches clinging on the cliffs  
As birds alighting might for storm's sake cling,  
Moored to the rocks as tempest-harried skiffs  
To perilous refuge from the loud wind's wing ;

The stairs on stairs that wind and change and climb  
Even up to the utmost crag's edge curved and curled,  
More bright than vision, more than faith sublime,  
Strange as the light and darkness of the world ;

Strange as are night and morning, stars and sun,  
And washed from west and east by day's deep tide  
Shine yet less fair, when all their heights are won,  
Than sundawn shows thy pillared mountain-side.

Even so the dawn of death, whose light makes dim  
The starry fires that life sees rise and set,  
Shows higher than here he shone before us him  
Whom faith forgets not, nor shall fame forget.

Even so those else unfooted heights we climb  
Through scudding mist and eddying whirls of cloud,  
Blind as a pilot beaten blind with foam,  
And shrouded as a corpse with storm's grey shroud,

Foot following foot along the sheer strait ledge  
Where space was none to bear the wild goat's feet  
Till blind we sat on the outer footless edge  
Where darkling death seemed fain to share the  
seat,

The abyss before us, viewless even as time's,  
The abyss to left of us, the abyss to right,  
Bid thought now dream how high the freed soul  
climbs  
That death sets free from change of day and night.

The might of raging mist and wind whose wrath  
Shut from our eyes the narrowing rock we trod,  
The wondrous world it darkened, made our path  
Like theirs who take the shadow of death for God.

Yet eastward, veiled in vapour white as snow,  
The grim black herbless heights that scorn the  
sun  
And mock the face of morning rose to show  
The work of earth-born fire and earthquake done.

And half the world was haggard night, wherein  
We strove our blind way through : but far above  
Was light that watched the wild mists whirl and  
spin,  
And far beneath a land worth light and love.

Deep down the Valley of the Curse, undaunted  
By shadow and whisper of winds with sins for  
wings  
And ghosts of crime wherethrough the heights live  
haunted  
By present sense of past and monstrous things,

The glimmering water holds its gracious way  
Full forth, and keeps one happier hand's-breadth  
green  
Of all that storm-scarred world whereon the sway  
Sits dark as death of deadlier things unseen.

But on the soundless and the viewless river  
That bears through night perchance again to day  
The dead whom death and twin-born fame deliver  
From life that dies, and time's inveterate sway,

No shadow save of falsehood and of fear  
That brands the future with the past, and bids  
The spirit wither and the soul grow sere,  
Hovers or hangs to cloud life's opening lids,

If life have eyes to lift again and see,  
Beyond the bounds of sensual sight or breath,  
What life incognisable of ours may be  
That turns our light to darkness deep as death.

Priests and the soulless serfs of priests may swarm  
With vulturous acclamation, loud in lies,  
About his dust while yet his dust is warm  
Who mocked as sunlight mocks their base blind  
eyes,

Their godless ghost of godhead, false and foul  
As fear his dam or hell his throne : but we,  
Scarce hearing, heed no carrion church-wolf's howl :  
The corpse be theirs to mock ; the soul is free.

Free as ere yet its earthly day was done  
It lived above the coil about us curled :  
A soul whose eyes were keener than the sun,  
A soul whose wings were wider than the world.

We, sons of east and west, ringed round with  
dreams,  
Bound fast with visions, girt about with fears,  
Live, trust, and think by chance, while shadow  
seems  
Light, and the wind that wrecks a hand that  
steers.

He, whose full soul held east and west in poise,  
Weighed man with man, and creed of man's with  
creed,  
And age with age, their triumphs and their toys,  
And found what faith may read not and may read.

Scorn deep and strong as death and life, that lit  
With fire the smile at lies and dreams outworn  
Wherewith he smote them, showed sublime in it  
The splendour and the steadfastness of scorn.

What loftier heaven, what lordlier air, what space  
Illimitable, insuperable, infinite,  
Now to that strong-winged soul yields ampler place  
Than passing darkness yields to passing light,

No dream, no faith can tell us : hope and fear,  
Whose tongues were loud of old as children's, now  
From babbling fall to silence : change is here,  
And death ; dark furrows drawn by time's dark  
plough.

Still sunward here on earth its flight was bent,  
Even since the man within the child began  
To yearn and kindle with superb intent  
And trust in time to magnify the man.

Still toward the old garden of the Sun, whose fruit  
The honey-heavy lips of Sophocles  
Desired and sang, wherein the unwithering root  
Sprang of all growths that thought brings forth  
and sees

Incarnate, bright with bloom or dense with leaf  
Far-shadowing, deep as depth of dawn or night :  
And all were parcel of the garnered sheaf  
His strenuous spirit bound and stored aright.

And eastward now, and ever toward the dawn,  
If death's deep veil by life's bright hand be rent,  
We see, as through the shadow of death withdrawn,  
The imperious soul's indomitable ascent.

But not the soul whose labour knew not end—  
But not the swordsman's hand, the crested head—  
The royal heart we mourn, the faultless friend,  
Burton—a name that lives till fame be dead.

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS  
ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

## I

THE clearest eyes in all the world they read  
 With sense more keen and spirit of sight more  
 true  
 Than burns and thrills in sunrise, when the dew  
 Flames, and absorbs the glory round it shed,  
 As they the light of ages quick and dead,  
 Closed now, forsake us : yet the shaft that slew  
 Can slay not one of all the works we knew,  
 Nor death discrown that many-laurelled head.

The works of words whose life seems lightning  
 wrought,  
 And moulded of unconquerable thought,  
 And quickened with imperishable flame,  
 Stand fast and shine and smile; assured that nought  
 May fade of all their myriad-moulded fame,  
 Nor England's memory clasp not Browning's  
 name.

*December 13, 1889.*

## II

Death, what hast thou to do with one for whom  
 Time is not lord, but servant? What least part  
 Of all the fire that fed his living heart,  
 Of all the light more keen than sundawn's bloom  
 That lit and led his spirit, strong as doom  
 And bright as hope, can aught thy breath may dart  
 Quench? Nay, thou knowest he knew thee what  
 thou art,  
 A shadow born of terror's barren womb,  
 That brings not forth save shadows. What art thou,  
 To dream, albeit thou breathe upon his brow,  
 That power on him is given thee,—that thy breath  
 Can make him less than love acclaims him now,  
 And hears all time sound back the word it saith?  
 What part hast thou then in his glory, Death?

## III

A graceless doom it seems that bids us grieve:  
 Venice and winter, hand in deadly hand,  
 Have slain the lover of her sunbright strand  
 And singer of a stormbright Christmas Eve.  
 A graceless guerdon we that loved receive  
 For all our love, from that the dearest land  
 Love worshipped ever. Blithe and soft and bland,  
 Too fair for storm to scathe or fire to cleave,  
 Shone on our dreams and memories evermore  
 The domes, the towers, the mountains and the shore  
 That gird or guard thee, Venice: cold and black  
 Seems now the face we loved as he of yore.  
 We have given thee love—no stint, no stay, no lack:  
 What gift, what gift is this thou hast given us back?

## IV

But he—to him, who knows what gift is thine,  
 Death? Hardly may we think or hope, when we  
 Pass likewise thither where to-night is he,  
 Beyond the irremeable outer seas that shine  
 And darken round such dreams as half divine  
 Some sunlit harbour in that starless sea  
 Where gleams no ship to windward or to lee,  
 To read with him the secret of thy shrine.

There too, as here, may song, delight, and love,  
 The nightingale, the sea-bird, and the dove,  
 Fulfil with joy the splendour of the sky  
 Till all beneath wax bright as all above :  
 But none of all that search the heavens, and try  
 The sun, may match the sovereign eagle's eye.

*December 14.*

## V

Among the wondrous ways of men and time  
 He went as one that ever found and sought  
 And bore in hand the lamplike spirit of thought  
 To illumine with instance of its fire sublime  
 The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime.  
 No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,  
 No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought  
 That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,  
 No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,  
 No love more lovely than the snows are white,  
 No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,  
 No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,  
 But he might hear, interpret, or illumine  
 With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

## VI

What secret thing of splendour or of shade  
 Surmised in all those wandering ways wherein  
 Man, led of love and life and death and sin,  
 Strays, climbs, or cowers, allured, absorbed, afraid,  
 Might not the strong and sunlike sense invade  
 Of that full soul that had for aim to win  
 Light, silent over time's dark toil and din,  
 Life, at whose touch death fades as dead things fade ?  
 O spirit of man, what mystery moves in thee  
 That he might know not of in spirit, and see  
 The heart within the heart that seems to strive,  
 The life within the life that seems to be,  
 And hear, through all thy storms that whirl and  
 drive,  
 The living sound of all men's souls alive ?

## VII

He held no dream worth waking : so he said,  
 He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,  
 Awakened out of life wherein we sleep  
 And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.  
 But never death for him was dark or dread :  
 "Look forth" he bade the soul, and fear not. Weep,  
 All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep  
 Vain memory's vision of a vanished head  
 As all that lives of all that once was he  
 Save that which lightens from his word : but we,  
 Who, seeing the sunset-coloured waters roll,  
 Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,  
 Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole,  
 And life and death but shadows of the soul.

*December 15.*

## SUNSET AND MOONRISE

NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1889

ALL the west, whereon the sunset sealed the dead  
year's glorious grave  
Fast with seals of light and fire and cloud that  
light and fire illume,  
Glows at heart and kindles earth and heaven with  
joyous blush and bloom,  
Warm and wide as life, and glad of death that only  
slays to save.  
As a tide-reconquered sea-rock lies aflush with the  
influent wave  
Lies the light aflush with darkness, lapped about  
by lustrous gloom,  
Even as life with death, and fame with time, and  
memory with the tomb  
Where a dead man hath for vassals Fame the serf  
and Time the slave.

Far from earth as heaven, the steadfast light with-  
drawn, superb, suspense,  
Burns in dumb divine expansion of illimitable  
flower :

Moonrise whets the shadow's edges keen as noon-tide : hence and thence  
Glows the presence from us passing, shines and passes not the power.  
Souls arise whose word remembered is as spirit within the sense :  
All the hours are theirs of all the seasons : death has but his hour.

## BIRTHDAY ODE

AUGUST 6, 1891

## I

LOVE and praise, and a length of days whose shadow  
 cast upon time is light,  
 Days whose sound was a spell shed round from  
 wheeling wings as of doves in flight,  
 Meet in one, that the mounting sun to-day may  
 triumph, and cast out night.

Two years more than the full fourscore lay hallowing  
 hands on a sacred head—  
 Scarce one score of the perfect four uncrowned of  
 fame as they smiled and fled :  
 Still and soft and alive aloft their sunlight stays  
 though the suns be dead.

Ere we were or were thought on, ere the love that  
 gave us to life began,  
 Fame grew strong with his crescent song, to greet  
 the goal of the race they ran,  
 Song with fame, and the lustrous name with years  
 whose changes acclaimed the man.

## II

Soon, ere time in the rounding rhyme of choral seasons  
had hailed us men,  
We too heard and acclaimed the word whose breath  
was life upon England then—  
Life more bright than the breathless light of soundless  
noon in a songless glen.

Ah, the joy of the heartstruck boy whose ear was  
opened of love to hear !  
Ah, the bliss of the burning kiss of song and spirit,  
the mounting cheer  
Lit with fire of divine desire and love that knew not  
if love were fear !

Fear and love as of heaven above and earth enkindled  
of heaven were one ;  
One white flame, that around his name grew keen and  
strong as the worldwide sun ;  
Awe made bright with implied delight, as weft with  
weft of the rainbow spun.

## III

He that fears not the voice he hears and loves shall  
never have heart to sing :  
All the grace of the sun-god's face that bids the soul  
as a fountain spring  
Bids the brow that receives it bow, and hail his like-  
ness on earth as king.

We that knew when the sun's shaft flew beheld and  
worshipped, adored and heard :  
Light rang round it of shining sound, whence all  
men's hearts were subdued and stirred :  
Joy, love, sorrow, the day, the morrow, took life upon  
them in one man's word.

Not for him can the years wax dim, nor downward  
swerve on a darkening way :  
Upward wind they, and leave behind such light as  
lightens the front of May :  
Fair as youth and sublime as truth we find the fame  
that we hail to-day.

## THRENODY

OCTOBER 6, 1892

## I

LIFE, sublime and serene when time had power upon  
it and ruled its breath,  
Changed it, bade it be glad or sad, and hear what  
change in the world's ear saith,  
Shines more fair in the starrier air whose glory  
lightens the dusk of death.

Suns that sink on the wan sea's brink, and moons  
that kindle and flame and fade,  
Leave more clear for the darkness here the stars that  
set not and see not shade  
Rise and rise on the lowlier skies by rule of sunlight  
and moonlight swayed.

So, when night for his eyes grew bright, his proud  
head pillow'd on Shakespeare's breast,  
Hand in hand with him, soon to stand where shine  
the glories that death loves best,  
Passed the light of his face from sight, and sank  
sublimely to radiant rest.

## II

Far above us and all our love, beyond all reach of  
 its voiceless praise,  
 Shines for ever the name that never shall feel the  
 shade of the changeful days  
 Fall and chill the delight that still sees winter's light  
 on it shine like May's.

Strong as death is the dark day's breath whose blast  
 has withered the life we see  
 Here where light is the child of night, and less than  
 visions or dreams are we :  
 Strong as death ; but a word, a breath, a dream is  
 stronger than death can be.

Strong as truth and superb in youth eternal, fair as  
 the sundawn's flame  
 Seen when May on her first-born day bids earth exult  
 in her radiant name,  
 Lives, clothed round with its praise and crowned  
 with love that dies not, his love-lit fame.

## III

Fairer far than the morning star, and sweet for us as  
 the songs that rang  
 Loud through heaven from the choral Seven when all  
 the stars of the morning sang,  
 Shines the song that we loved so long—since first  
 such love in us flamed and sprang.

England glows as a sunlit rose from mead to mountain, from sea to sea,  
Bright with love and with pride above all taint of sorrow that needs must be,  
Needs must live for an hour, and give its rainbow's glory to lawn and lea.

Not through tears shall the new-born years behold him, crowned with applause of men,  
Pass at last from a lustrous past to life that lightens beyond their ken,  
Glad and dead, and from earthward led to sunward, guided of Imogen.

## THE BALLAD OF MELICERTES

IN MEMORY OF THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

DEATH, a light outshining life, bids heaven resume  
 Star by star the souls whose light made earth divine.  
 Death, a night outshining day, sees burn and bloom  
 Flower by flower, and sun by sun, the fames that  
 shine  
 Deathless, higher than life beheld their sovereign  
 sign.  
 Dead Simonides of Ceos, late restored,  
 Given again of God, again by man deplored,  
 Shone but yestereve, a glory frail as breath.  
 Frail? But fame's breath quickens, kindles, keeps in  
 ward,  
 Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Mother's love, and rapture of the sea, whose womb  
 Breeds eternal life of joy that stings like brine,  
 Pride of song, and joy to dare the singer's doom,  
 Sorrow soft as sleep and laughter bright as wine,  
 Flushed and filled with fragrant fire his lyric line.  
 As the sea-shell utters, like a stricken chord,  
 Music uttering all the sea's within it stored,  
 Poet well-beloved, whose praise our sorrow saith,  
 So thy songs retain thy soul, and so record  
 Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Side by side we mourned at Gautier's golden tomb :  
    Here in spirit now I stand and mourn at thine.  
Yet no breath of death strikes thence, no shadow of  
    gloom,  
Only light more bright than gold of the inmost  
    mine,  
Only steam of incense warm from love's own  
    shrine.  
Not the darkling stream, the sundering Stygian ford,  
Not the hour that smites and severs as a sword,  
    Not the night subduing light that perisheth,  
Smite, subdue, divide from us by doom abhorred,  
    Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

Prince of song more sweet than honey, lyric lord,  
Not thy France here only mourns a light adored,  
    One whose love-lit fame the world inheriteth.  
Strangers too, now brethren, hail with heart's accord  
    Life so sweet as this that dies and casts off death.

## AU TOMBEAU DE BANVILLE

LA plus douce des voix qui vibraient sous le ciel  
Se tait : les rossignols ailés pleurent le frère  
Qui s'envole au-dessus de l'âpre et sombre terre,  
Ne lui laissant plus voir que l'être essentiel,

Esprit qui chante et rit, fleur d'une âme sans fiel.  
L'ombre élyséenne, où la nuit n'est que lumière,  
Revoit, tout revêtu de splendeur douce et fière,  
Mélicerte, poète à la bouche de miel.

Dieux exilés, passants célestes de ce monde,  
Dont on entend parfois dans notre nuit profonde  
Vibrer la voix, frémir les ailes, vous savez  
S'il vous aimait, s'il vous pleura, lui dont la vie  
Et le chant rappelaient les vôtres. Recevez  
L'âme de Mélicerte affranchie et ravie.

## LIGHT: AN EPIC EDE

To PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON

LOVE will not weep because the seal is broken  
 That sealed upon a life beloved and brief  
 Darkness, and let but song break through for token  
 How deep, too far for even thy song's relief,  
 Slept in thy soul the secret springs of grief.

Thy song may soothe full many a soul hereafter,  
 As tears, if tears will come, dissolve despair ;  
 As here but late, with smile more bright than  
 laughter,  
 Thy sweet strange yearning eyes would seem to  
 bear  
 Witness that joy might cleave the clouds of care.

Two days agone, and love was one with pity  
 When love gave thought wings toward the glim-  
 mering goal  
 Where, as a shrine lit in some darkling city,  
 Shone soft the shrouded image of thy soul :  
 And now thou art healed of life ; thou art healed,  
 and whole.

Yea, two days since, all we that loved thee pitied :  
And now with wondering love, with shame of face,  
We think how foolish now, how far unfitted,  
Should be from us, toward thee who hast run thy  
race,  
Pity—toward thee, who hast won the painless  
place ;

The painless world of death, yet unbehilden  
Of eyes that dream what light now lightens thine  
And will not weep. Thought, yearning toward those  
olden  
Dear hours that sorrow sees and sees not shine,  
Bows tearless down before a flameless shrine :  
A flameless altar here of life and sorrow  
Quenched and consumed together. These were  
one,  
One thing for thee, as night was one with morrow  
And utter darkness with the sovereign sun :  
And now thou seest life, sorrow, and darkness  
done.

And yet love yearns again to win thee hither ;  
Blind love, and loveless, and unworthy thee :  
Here where I watch the hours of darkness wither,  
Here where mine eyes were glad and sad to see  
Thine that could see not mine, though turned on me.

But now, if aught beyond sweet sleep lie hidden,  
And sleep be sealed not fast on dead men's sight  
For ever, thine hath grace for ours forbidden,  
And sees us compassed round with change and  
night :  
Yet light like thine is ours, if love be light.

## THRENODY

WATCHING here alone by the fire whereat last year  
Sat with me the friend that a week since yet was  
near,

That a week has borne so far and hid so deep,  
Woe am I that I may not weep,  
May not yearn to behold him here.

Shame were mine, and little the love I bore him  
were,

Now to mourn that better he fares than love may  
fare

Which desires, and would not have indeed, its  
will,

Would not love him so worse than ill,  
Would not clothe him again with care.

Yet can love not choose but remember, hearts but  
ache,

Eyes but darken, only for one vain thought's poor  
sake,

For the thought that by this hearth's now lonely  
side

Two fast friends, on the day he died,  
Looked once more for his hand to take.

Let thy soul forgive them, and pardon heal the sin,  
Though their hearts be heavy to think what then had  
been,

The delight that never while they live may be—  
Love's communion of speech with thee.  
Soul and speech with the soul therein.

O my friend, O brother, a glory veiled and marred !  
Never love made moan for a life more evil-starred.

Was it envy, chance, or chance-compelling fate,  
Whence thy spirit was bruised so late,  
Bowed so heavily, bound so hard ?

Now released, it may be,—if only love might  
know—

Filled and fired with sight, it beholds us blind and  
low

With a pity keener yet, if that may be,  
Even than ever was this that we  
Felt, when love of thee wrought us woe.

None may tell the depths and the heights of life and  
death.

What we may we give thee : a word that sorrow  
saith,

And that none will heed save sorrow : scarce a  
song.

All we may, who have loved thee long,  
Take : the best we can give is breath.

## A DIRGE

A BELL tolls on in my heart  
 As though in my ears a knell  
 Had ceased for awhile to swell,  
 But the sense of it would not part  
 From the spirit that bears its part  
 In the chime of the soundless bell.

Ah dear dead singer of sorrow,  
 The burden is now not thine  
 That grief bade sound for a sign  
 Through the songs of the night whose morrow  
 Has risen, and I may not borrow  
 A beam from its radiant shrine.

The burden has dropped from thee  
 That grief on thy life bound fast ;  
 The winter is over and past  
 Whose end thou wast fain to see.  
 Shall sorrow not comfort me  
 That is thine no longer—at last ?

Good day, good night, and good morrow,  
Men living and mourning say.  
For thee we could only pray  
That night of the day might borrow  
Such comfort as dreams lend sorrow :  
Death gives thee at last good day.

## A REMINISCENCE

THE rose to the wind has yielded : all its leaves  
 Lie strewn on the graveyard grass, and all their  
 light  
 And colour and fragrance leave our sense and  
 sight  
 Bereft as a man whom bitter time bereaves  
 Of blossom at once and hope of garnered sheaves,  
 Of April at once and August. Day to night  
 Calls wailing, and life to death, and depth to  
 height,  
 And soul upon soul of man that hears and grieves.

Who knows, though he see the snow-cold blossom  
 shed,  
 If haply the heart that burned within the rose,  
 The spirit in sense, the life of life be dead ?

If haply the wind that slays with storming snows  
 Be one with the wind that quickens ? Bow thine  
 head,

O Sorrow, and commune with thine heart : who  
 knows ?

## VIA DOLOROSA

THE days of a man are threescore years and ten.  
The days of his life were half a man's, whom we  
Lament, and would yet not bid him back, to be  
Partaker of all the woes and ways of men.  
Life sent him enough of sorrow: not again  
Would anguish of love, beholding him set free,  
Bring back the beloved to suffer life and see  
No light but the fire of grief that scathed him then.

We know not at all: we hope, and do not fear.  
We shall not again behold him, late so near,  
Who now from afar above, with eyes alight  
And spirit enkindled, haply toward us here  
Looks down unforgetful yet of days like night  
And love that has yet his sightless face in sight.

*February 15, 1887.*

## I

## TRANSFIGURATION

BUT half a man's days—and his days were nights.  
What hearts were ours who loved him, should we  
pray  
That night would yield him back to darkling day,  
Sweet death that soothes, to life that spoils and  
smites ?  
For now, perchance, life lovelier than the light's  
That shed no comfort on his weary way  
Shows him what none may dream to see or say  
Ere yet the soul may scale those topless heights  
Where death lies dead, and triumph. Haply there  
Already may his kindling eyesight find  
Faces of friends—no face than nis more fair—  
And first among them found of all his kind  
Milton, with crowns from Eden on his hair,  
And eyes that meet a brother's now not blind.

## II

## DELIVERANCE

O DEATH, fair Death, sole comforter and sweet,  
Nor Love nor Hope can give such gifts as thine.  
Sleep hardly shows us round thy shadowy shrine  
What roses hang, what music floats, what feet  
Pass and what wings of angels. We repeat  
Wild words or mild, disastrous or divine,  
Blind prayer, blind imprecation, seeing no sign  
Nor hearing aught of thee not faint and fleet  
As words of men or snowflakes on the wind.  
But if we chide thee, saying "Thou hast sinned,  
thou hast sinned,  
Dark Death, to take so sweet a light away  
As shone but late, though shadowed, in our skies,"  
We hear thine answer—"Night has given what day  
Denied him : darkness hath unsealed his eyes."

## III

## THANKSGIVING

COULD love give strength to thank thee ! Love can  
give

Strong sorrow heart to suffer : what we bear  
We would not put away, albeit this were  
A burden love might cast aside and live.  
Love chooses rather pain than palliative,  
Sharp thought than soft oblivion. May we dare  
So trample down our passion and our prayer  
That fain would cling round feet now fugitive  
And stay them—so remember, so forget,  
What joy we had who had his presence yet,  
What griefs were his while joy in him was ours  
And grief made weary music of his breath,  
As even to hail his best and last of hours  
With love grown strong enough to thank thee,  
Death ?

## IV

## LIBITINA VERTICORDIA

SISTER of sleep, healer of life, divine  
As rest and strong as very love may be,  
To set the soul that love could set not free,  
To bid the skies that day could bid not shine,  
To give the gift that life withheld was thine.  
With all my heart I loved one borne from me :  
And all my heart bows down and praises thee,  
Death, that hast now made grief not his but mine.

O Changer of men's hearts, we would not bid thee  
Turn back our hearts from sorrow : this alone  
We bid, we pray thee, from thy sovereign throne  
And sanctuary sublime where heaven has hid thee,  
Give : grace to know of those for whom we weep  
That if they wake their life is sweet as sleep.

## V

## THE ORDER OF RELEASE

THOU canst not give it. Grace enough is ours  
To know that pain for him has fallen on rest.  
The worst we know was his on earth : the best,  
We fain would think,—a thought no fear deflowers—  
Is his, released from bonds of rayless hours.  
Ah, turn our hearts from longing ; bid our quest  
Cease, as content with failure. This thy guest  
Sleeps, vexed no more of time's imperious powers,  
The spirit of hope, the spirit of change and loss,  
The spirit of love bowed down beneath his cross,  
Nor now needs comfort from the strength of song  
Love, should he wake, bears now no cross for him :  
Dead hope, whose living eyes like his were dim,  
Has brought forth better comfort, strength more  
strong.

## VI

## PSYCHAGOGOS

As Greece of old acclaimed thee God and man,  
So, Death, our tongue acclaims thee : yet wast thou  
Hailed of old Rome as Romans hail thee now,  
Goddess and woman. Since the sands first ran  
That told when first man's life and death began,  
The shadows round thy blind ambiguous brow  
Have mocked the votive plea, the pleading vow  
That sought thee sorrowing, fain to bless or ban.

But stronger than a father's love is thine,  
And gentler than a mother's. Lord and God,  
Thy staff is surer than the wizard rod  
That Hermes bare as priest before thy shrine  
And herald of thy mercies. We could give  
Nought, when we would have given : thou bidst  
him live

## VII

## THE LAST WORD

So many a dream and hope that went and came,  
So many and sweet, that love thought like to be,  
Of hours as bright and soft as those for me  
That made our hearts for song's sweet love the same,  
Lie now struck dead, that hope seems one with  
shame.

O Death, thy name is Love : we know it, and see  
The witness : yet for very love's sake we  
Can hardly bear to mix with thine his name.

Philip, how hard it is to bid thee part  
Thou knowest, if aught thou knowest where now  
thou art  
Of us that loved and love thee. None may tell  
What none but knows—how hard it is to say  
The word that seals up sorrow, darkens day,  
And bids fare forth the soul it bids farewell.

## IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI

THE wider world of men that is not ours  
 Receives a soul whose life on earth was light.  
 Though darkness close the date of human hours,  
 Love holds the spirit and sense of life in sight,  
 That may not, even though death bid fly, take flight.  
 Faith, love, and hope fulfilled with memory, see  
 As clear and dear as life could bid it be  
 The present soul that is and is not he.

He, who held up the shield and sword of Rome  
 Against the ravening brood of recreant France,  
 Beside the man of men whom heaven took home  
 When earth beheld the spring's first eyebeams  
 glance  
 And life and winter seemed alike a trance  
 Eighteen years since, in sight of heaven and spring  
 That saw the soul above all souls take wing,  
 He too now hears the heaven we hear not sing.

He too now dwells where death is dead, and stands  
 Where souls like stars exult in life to be :  
 Whence all who linked heroic hearts and hands  
 Shine on our sight, and give it strength to see  
 What hope makes fair for all whom faith makes  
 free :

Free with such freedom as we find in sleep,  
The light sweet shadow of death, when dreams are  
deep  
And high as heaven whence light and lightning leap.

And scarce a month yet gone, his living hand  
Writ loving words that sealed me friend of his.  
Are heaven and earth as near as sea to strand ?  
May life and death as bride and bridegroom kiss ?  
His last month's written word abides, and is ;  
Clear as the sun that lit through storm and strife  
And darkling days when hope took fear to wife  
The faith whose fire was light of all his life.

A life so fair, so pure of earthlier leaven,  
That none hath won through higher and harder  
ways  
The deathless life of death which earth calls heaven ;  
Heaven, and the light of love on earth, and praise  
Of silent memory through subsiding days  
Wherein the light subsides not whence the past  
Feeds full with life the future. Time holds fast  
Their names whom faith forgets not, first and last.

Forget ? The dark forgets not dawn, nor we  
The suns that sink to rise again, and shine  
Lords of live years and ages. Earth and sea  
Forget not heaven that makes them seem divine,  
Though night put out their fires and bid their  
shrine  
Be dark and pale as storm and twilight. Day,  
Not night, is everlasting : life's full sway  
Bids death bow down as dead, and pass away.

What part has death in souls that past all fear  
 Win heavenward their supernal way, and smite  
 With scorn sublime as heaven such dreams as here  
 Plague and perplex with cloud and fire the light  
 That leads men's waking souls from glimmering  
 night  
 To the awless heights of day, whereon man's awe,  
 Transfigured, dies in rapture, seeing the law  
 Sealed of the sun that earth arising saw ?

Faith, justice, mercy, love, and heaven-born hate  
 That sets them all on fire and bids them be  
 More than soft words and dreams that wake too late,  
 Shone living through the lordly life that we  
 Beheld, revered, and loved on earth, while he  
 Dwelt here, and bade our eyes take light thereof ;  
 Light as from heaven that flamed or smiled above  
 In light or fire whose very hate was love.

No hate of man, but hate of hate whose foam  
 Sheds poison forth from tongues of snakes and  
 priests,  
 And stains the sickening air with steams whence Rome  
 Now feeds not full the God that slays and feasts ;  
 For now the fangs of all the ravenous beasts  
 That ramped about him, fain of prayer and prey,  
 Fulfil their lust no more : the tide of day  
 Swells, and compels him down the deathward way.

Night sucks the Church its creature down, and hell  
 Yawns, heaves, and yearns to clasp its loathliest  
 child  
 Close to the breasts that bore it. All the spell  
 Whence darkness saw the dawn in heaven defiled  
 Is dumb as death : the lips that lied and smiled

Wax white for fear as ashes. She that bore  
The banner up of darkness now no more  
Sheds night and fear and shame from shore to shore.

When they that cast her kingdom down were born,  
North cried on south and east made moan to west  
For hopes that love had hardly heart to mourn,  
For Italy that was not. Kings on quest,  
By priests whose blessings burn as curses blest,  
Made spoil of souls and bodies bowed and bound,  
Hunted and harried, leashed as horse or hound,  
And hopeless of the hope that died unfound.

And now that faith has brought forth fruit to time,  
How should not memory praise their names, and  
hold  
Their record even as Dante's life sublime,  
Who bade his dream, found fair and false of old,  
Live? Not till earth and heaven be dead and cold  
May man forget whose work and will made one  
Italy, fair as heaven or freedom won,  
And left their fame to shine beside her sun.

*April 1890.*

## THE FESTIVAL OF BEATRICE

DANTE, sole standing on the heavenward height,  
Beheld and heard one saying, "Behold me well :  
I am, I am Beatrice." Heaven and hell  
Kept silence, and the illimitable light  
Of all the stars was darkness in his sight  
Whose eyes beheld her eyes again, and fell  
Shame-stricken. Since her soul took flight to dwell  
In heaven, six hundred years have taken flight.

And now that heavenliest part of earth whereon  
Shines yet their shadow as once their presence shone  
To her bears witness for his sake, as he  
For hers bare witness when her face was gone :  
No slave, no hospice now for grief—but free  
From shore to mountain and from Alp to sea.

## THE MONUMENT OF GIORDANO BRUNO

## I

NOT from without us, only from within,  
 Comes or can ever come upon us light  
 Whereby the soul keeps ever truth in sight.  
 No truth, no strength, no comfort man may win,  
 No grace for guidance, no release from sin,  
 Save of his own soul's giving. Deep and bright  
 As fire enkindled in the core of night  
 Burns in the soul where once its fire has been  
 The light that leads and quickens thought, inspired  
 To doubt and trust and conquer. So he said  
 Whom Sidney, flower of England, lordliest head  
 Of all we love, loved : but the fates required  
 A sacrifice to hate and hell, ere fame  
 Should set with his in heaven Giordano's name.

## II

Cover thine eyes and weep, O child of hell,  
 Grey spouse of Satan, Church of name abhorred.  
 Weep, withered harlot, with thy weeping lord,  
 Now none will buy the heaven thou hast to sell  
 At price of prostituted souls, and swell  
 Thy loveless list of lovers. Fire and sword  
 No more are thine : the steel, the wheel, the cord,  
 The flames that rose round living limbs, and fell

In lifeless ash and ember, now no more  
Approve thee godlike. Rome, redeemed at last  
From all the red pollution of thy past,  
Acclaims the grave bright face that smiled of yore  
Even on the fire that caught it round and clomb  
To cast its ashes on the face of Rome,

*June 9, 1889.*

## LIFE IN DEATH

He should have followed who goes forth before us,  
Last born of us in life, in death first-born :  
The last to lift up eyes against the morn,  
The first to see the sunset. Life, that bore us  
Perchance for death to comfort and restore us,  
Of him hath left us here awhile forlorn,  
For him is as a garment overworn,  
And time and change, with suns and stars in chorus,  
Silent. But if, beyond all change or time,  
A law more just, more equal, more sublime  
Than sways the surge of life's loud sterile sea  
Sways that still world whose peace environs him,  
Where death lies dead as night when stars wax dim,  
Above all thought or hope of ours is he.

*August 2, 1891.*

## EPICEDE

As a vesture shalt thou change them, said the prophet,

And the raiment that was flesh is turned to dust ;  
Dust and flesh and dust again the likeness of it,

And the fine gold woven and worn of youth is rust.  
Hours that wax and wane salute the shade and scoff it,

That it knows not aught it doth nor aught it must :  
Day by day the speeding soul makes haste to doff it,  
Night by night the pride of life resigns its trust.

Sleep, whose silent notes of song loud life's derange not,

Takes the trust in hand awhile as angels may :  
Joy with wings that rest not, grief with wings that range not,

Guard the gates of sleep and waking, gold or grey.  
Joys that joys estrange, and griefs that griefs estrange not,

Day that yearns for night, and night that yearns for day,

As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they change not,

Seeing that change may never change or pass away.

Life of death makes question, " What art thou that  
changest ?

What am I, that fear should trust or faith should  
doubt ?

I that lighten, thou that darkenest and estrangest,  
Is it night or day that girds us round about ?

Light and darkness on the ways wherein thou  
rangest

Seem as one, and beams as clouds they put to  
rout.

Strange is hope, but fear of all things born were  
strangest,

Seeing that none may strive with change to cast it  
out.

" Change alone stands fast, thou sayest, O death :  
I know not :

What art thou, my brother death, that thou  
shouldst know ?

Men may reap no fruits of fields wherein they sow  
not ;

Hope or fear is all the seed we have to sow.

Winter seals the sacred springs up that they flow  
not :

Wind and sun and change unbind them, and they  
flow.

Am I thou or art thou I ? The years that show not  
Pass, and leave no sign when time shall be to  
show."

Hope makes suit to faith lest fear give ear to sorrow :

Doubt strews dust upon his head, and goes his way.

All the golden hope that life of death would borrow,  
How, if death require again, may life repay ?

Earth endures no darkness whence no light yearns  
thorough ;

God in man as light in darkness lives, they say :  
Yet, would midnight take assurance of the morrow,  
Who shall pledge the faith or seal the bond of day ?

Darkness, mute or loud with music or with mourn-  
ing,

Starry darkness, winged with wind or clothed with  
calm,

Dreams no dream of grief or fear or wrath or warn-  
ing,

Bears no sign of race or goal or strife or palm.

Word of blessing, word of mocking or of scorning,

Knows it none, nor whence its breath sheds blight  
or balm.

Yet a little while, and hark, the psalm of morning :

Yet a little while, and silence takes the psalm.

All the comfort, all the worship, all the wonder,  
All the light of love that darkness holds in fee,  
All the song that silence keeps or keeps not under,  
Night, the soul that knows gives thanks for all to  
thee.

Far beyond the gates that morning strikes in sunder  
Hopes that grief makes holy, dreams that fear sets  
free,

Far above the throne of thought, the lair of thunder,  
Silent shines the word whose utterance fills the  
sea.

MEMORIAL VERSES ON THE  
DEATH OF WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

A LIFE more bright than the sun's face, bowed  
Through stress of season and coil of cloud,  
    Sets : and the sorrow that casts out fear  
Scarce deems him dead in his chill still shroud,

Dead on the breast of the dying year,  
Poet and painter and friend, thrice dear  
    For love of the suns long set, for love  
Of song that sets not with sunset here,

For love of the fervent heart, above  
Their sense who saw not the swift light move  
    That filled with sense of the loud sun's lyre  
The thoughts that passion was fain to prove

In fervent labour of high desire  
And faith that leapt from its own quenched pyre  
    Alive and strong as the sun, and caught  
From darkness light, and from twilight fire.

Passion, deep as the depths unsought  
Whence faith's own hope may redeem us nought,  
    Filled full with ardour of pain sublime  
His mourning song and his mounting thought.

Elate with sense of a sterner time,  
 His hand's flight climb as a bird's might climb  
     Calvary : dark in the darkling air  
 That shrank for fear of the crowning crime,

Three crosses rose on the hillside bare,  
 Shown scarce by grace of the lightning's glare  
     That clove the veil of the temple through  
 And smote the priests on the threshold there.

The soul that saw it, the hand that drew,  
 Whence light as thought's or as faith's glance flew  
     And stung to life the sepulchral past,  
 And bade the stars of it burn anew,

Held no less than the dead world fast  
 The light live shadows about them cast,  
     The likeness living of dawn and night,  
 The days that pass and the dreams that last.

Thought, clothed round with sorrow as light,  
 Dark as a cloud that the moon turns bright,  
     Moved, as a wind on the striving sea,  
 That yearns and quickens and flags in flight,

Through forms of colour and song that he  
 Who fain would have set its wide wings free  
     Cast round it, clothing or chaining hope  
 With lights that last not and shades that flee.

Scarce in song could his soul find scope,  
 Scarce the strength of his hand might ope  
     Art's inmost gate of her sovereign shrine,  
 To cope with heaven as a man may cope.

But high as the hope of a man may shine  
 The faith, the fervour, the life divine  
     That thrills our life and transfigures, rose  
 And shone resurgent, a sunbright sign,

Through shapes whereunder the strong soul glows  
 And fills them full as a sunlit rose  
     With sense and fervour of life, whose light  
 The fool's eye knows not, the man's eye knows.

None that can read or divine aright  
 The scriptures writ of the soul may slight  
     The strife of a strenuous soul to show  
 More than the craft of the hand may write.

None may slight it, and none may know  
 How high the flames that aspire and glow  
     From heart and spirit and soul may climb  
 And triumph ; higher than the souls lie low

Whose hearing hears not the livelong rhyme,  
 Whose eyesight sees not the light sublime,  
     That shines, that sounds, that ascends and lives  
 Unquenched of change, unobscured of time.

A long life's length, as a man's life gives  
 Space for the spirit that soars and strives  
     To strive and soar, has the soul shone through  
 That heeds not whither the world's wind drives

Now that the days and the ways it knew  
 Are strange, are dead as the dawn's grey dew  
     At high midnoon of the mounting day  
 That mocks the might of the dawn it slew.

Yet haply may not—and haply may—  
No sense abide of the dead sun's ray  
    Wherein the soul that outsoars us now  
Rejoiced with ours in its radiant sway.

Hope may hover, and doubt may bow,  
Dreaming. Haply—they dream not how—  
    Not life but death may indeed be dead  
When silence darkens the dead man's brow.

Hope, whose name is remembrance, fed  
With love that lightens from seasons fled,  
    Dreams, and craves not indeed to know,  
That death and life are as souls that wed.

But change that falls on the heart like snow  
Can chill not memory nor hope, that show  
    The soul, the spirit, the heart and head,  
Alive above us who strive below.

## AN OLD SAYING

MANY waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can the floods drown it.  
Who shall snare or slay the white dove  
Faith, whose very dreams crown it,  
Gird it round with grace and peace, deep,  
Warm, and pure, and soft as sweet sleep ?  
Many waters cannot quench love,  
Neither can the floods drown it.

Set me as a seal upon thine heart,  
As a seal upon thine arm.  
How should we behold the days depart  
And the nights resign their charm ?  
Love is as the soul : though hate and fear  
Waste and overthrow, they strike not here.  
Set me as a seal upon thine heart,  
As a seal upon thine arm.

## A MOSS-ROSE

If the rose of all flowers be the rarest  
That heaven may adore from above,  
And the fervent moss-rose be the fairest  
That sweetens the summer with love,

Can it be that a fairer than any  
Should blossom afar from the tree ?  
Yet one, and a symbol of many,  
Shone sudden for eyes that could see.

In the grime and the gloom of November  
The bliss and the bloom of July  
Bade autumn rejoice and remember  
The balm of the blossoms gone by.

Would you know what moss-rose now it may be  
That puts all the rest to the blush,  
The flower was the face of a baby,  
The moss was a bonnet of plush.

## TO A CAT

## I

STATELY, kindly, lordly friend,  
Condescend  
Here to sit by me, and turn  
Glorious eyes that smile and burn,  
Golden eyes, love's lustrous meed,  
On the golden page I read.

All your wondrous wealth of hair,  
Dark and fair,  
Silken-shaggy, soft and bright  
As the clouds and beams of night,  
Pays my reverent hand's caress  
Back with friendlier gentleness.

Dogs may fawn on all and some  
As they come ;  
You, a friend of loftier mind,  
Answer friends alone in kind.  
Just your foot upon my hand  
Softly bids it understand.

## TO A CAT

Morning round this silent sweet  
 Garden-seat  
 Sheds its wealth of gathering light,  
 Thrills the gradual clouds with might,  
 Changes woodland, orchard, heath.  
 Lawn, and garden there beneath.

Fair and dim they gleamed below :  
 Now they glow  
 Deep as even your sunbright eyes,  
 Fair as even the wakening skies.  
 Can it not or can it be  
 Now that you give thanks to see ?

May not you rejoice as I,  
 Seeing the sky  
 Change to heaven revealed, and bid  
 Earth reveal the heaven it hid  
 All night long from stars and moon,  
 Now the sun sets all in tune ?

What within you wakes with day  
 Who can say ?  
 All too little may we tell,  
 Friends who like each other well,  
 What might haply, if we might,  
 Bid us read our lives aright.

Wild on woodland ways your sires  
 Flashed like fires :

Fair as flame and fierce and fleet  
As with wings on wingless feet  
Shone and sprang your mother, free,  
Bright and brave as wind or sea.

Free and proud and glad as they,  
Here to-day

Rests or roams their radiant child,  
Vanquished not, but reconciled,  
Free from curb of aught above  
Save the lovely curb of love.

Love through dreams of souls divine  
Fain would shine

Round a dawn whose light and song  
Then should right our mutual wrong—  
Speak, and seal the love-lit law  
Sweet Assisi's seer foresaw.

Dreams were theirs ; yet haply may  
Dawn a day

When such friends and fellows born,  
Seeing our earth as fair at morn,  
May for wiser love's sake see  
More of heaven's deep heart than we.

## HAWTHORN DYKE

ALL the golden air is full of balm and bloom  
Where the hawthorns line the shelving dyke with  
flowers.  
Joyous children born of April's happiest hours,  
High and low they laugh and lighten, knowing their  
doom  
Bright as brief—to bless and cheer they know not  
whom,  
Heed not how, but washed and warmed with suns  
and showers  
Smile, and bid the sweet soft gradual banks and  
bowers  
Thrill with love of sunlit fire or starry gloom.  
All our moors and lawns all round rejoice ; but here  
All the rapturous resurrection of the year  
    Finds the radiant utterance perfect, sees the word  
Spoken, hears the light that speaks it. Far and  
    near,  
All the world is heaven : and man and flower and  
bird  
Here are one at heart with all things seen and  
heard.

## THE BROTHERS

THERE were twa brethren fell on strife;  
 Sweet fruits are sair to gather :  
 The tane has reft his brother of life ;  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

There were twa brethren fell to fray ;  
 Sweet fruits are sair to gather :  
 The tane is clad in a cloak of clay ;  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

O loud and loud was the live man's cry,  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
 "Would God the dead and the slain were I ! "  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O sair was the wrang and sair the fray,"  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
 "But liefer had love be slain than slay."  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

"O sweet is the life that sleeps at hame,"  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
 "But I maun wake on a far sea's faem."  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

“ And women are fairest of a’ things fair,”  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“ But never shall I kiss woman mair.”  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the birk and the aik and the thorn  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

He’s laid his brother to lie forlorn :  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

Between the bent and the burn and the broom  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

He’s laid him to sleep till dawn of doom :  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

He’s tane him owre the waters wide,  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

Afar to fleet and afar to bide :  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

His hair was yellow, his cheek was red,  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

When he set his face to the wind and fled :  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

His banes were stark and his een were bright  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

When he set his face to the sea by night :  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

His cheek was wan and his hair was grey  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

When he came back hame frae the wide world’s way :  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

His banes were weary, his een were dim,  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

And nae man lived and had mind of him :  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

“ O whatten a wreck wad they seek on land ”  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“ That they houk the turf to the seaward hand ? ”  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

“ O whatten a prey wad they think to take ”  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“ That they delve the dykes for a dead man’s sake ? ”  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

A bane of the dead in his hand he’s tane ;  
 Sweet fruits are sair to gather :

And the red blood brak frae the dead white bane.  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

He’s cast it forth of his auld faint hand ;  
 Sweet fruits are sair to gather :

And the red blood ran on the wan wet sand.  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

“ O whatten a slayer is this,” they said,  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“ That the straik of his hand should raise his dead ? ”  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

“ O weel is me for the sign I take ”  
 (Sweet fruits are sair to gather)

“ That now I may die for my auld sin’s sake.”  
 And the wind wears owre the heather.

“For the dead was in wait now fifty year,”  
(Sweet fruits are sair to gather)  
“And now shall I die for his blood’s sake here.”  
And the wind wears owre the heather.

### JACOBITE SONG

Now who will speak, and lie not,  
 And pledge not life, but give ?  
 Slaves herd with herded cattle :  
 The dawn grows bright for battle  
 And if we die, we die not ;  
 And if we live, we live.

The faith our fathers fought for,  
 The kings our fathers knew,  
 We fight but as they fought for :  
 We seek the goal they sought for,  
 The chance they hailed and knew,  
 The praise they strove and wrought for,  
 To leave their blood as dew  
 On fields that flower anew.

Men live that serve the stranger ;  
 Hounds live that huntsmen tame :  
 These life-days of our living  
 Are days of God's good giving  
 Where death smiles soft on danger  
 And life scowls dark on shame.

## JACOBITE SONG

And what would you do other,  
 Sweet wife, if you were I ?  
 And how should you be other,  
 My sister, than your brother,  
 If you were man as I,  
 Born of our sire and mother,  
 With choice to cower and fly,  
 And chance to strike and die ?

No churl's our oldworld name is,  
 The lands we leave are fair :  
 But fairer far than these are,  
 But wide as all the seas are,  
 But high as heaven the fame is  
 That if we die we share.

Our name the night may swallow,  
 Our lands the churl may take :  
 But night nor death may swallow,  
 Nor hell's nor heaven's dim hollow,  
 The star whose height we take,  
 The star whose light we follow  
 For faith's unfaltering sake  
 Till hope that sleeps awake.

Soft hope's light lure we serve not,  
 Nor follow, fain to find :  
 Dark time's last word may smite her  
 Dead, ere man's falsehood blight her :  
 But though she die, we swerve not,  
 Who cast not eye behind.

Faith speaks when hope dissembles :  
 Faith lives when hope lies dead :

If death as life dissembles,  
And all that night assembles  
    Of stars at dawn lie dead,  
Faint hope that smiles and trembles  
    May tell not well for dread :  
But faith has heard it said.

Now who will fight, and fly not,  
    And grudge not life to give?  
And who will strike beside us,  
If life's or death's light guide us ?  
For if we live, we die not,  
    And if we die, we live.

## THE BALLAD OF DEAD MEN'S BAY

THE sea swings owre the slants of sand,  
 All white with winds that drive ;  
 The sea swirls up to the stilt dim strand,  
 Where nae man comes alive.

At the grey soft edge of the fruitless surf  
 A light flame sinks and springs ;  
 At the grey soft rim of the flowerless turf  
 A low flame leaps and clings.

What light is this on a sunless shore,  
 What gleam on a starless sea ?  
 Was it earth's or hell's waste womb that bore  
 Such births as should not be ?

As lithe snakes turning, as bright stars burning,  
 They bicker and beckon and call ;  
 As wild waves churning, as wild winds yearning,  
 They flicker and climb and fall.

A soft strange cry from the landward rings—  
 “ What ails the sea to shine ? ”  
 A keen sweet note from the spray's rim springs—  
 “ What fires are these of thine ? ”

A soul am I that was born on earth  
For ae day's wesome span :  
Death bound me fast on the bourn of birth  
Ere I were christened man.

“ A light by night, I fleet and fare  
Till the day of wrath and woe ;  
On the hems of earth and the skirts of air  
Winds hurl me to and fro.”

“ O well is thee, though the weird be strange  
That bids thee flit and flee ;  
For hope is child of the womb of change,  
And hope keeps watch with thee.

“ When the years are gone, and the time is come,  
God's grace may give thee grace ;  
And thy soul may sing, though thy soul were dumb,  
And shine before God's face.

“ But I, that lighten and revel and roll  
With the foam of the plunging sea,  
No sign is mine of a breathing soul  
That God should pity me.

“ Nor death, nor heaven, nor hell, nor birth  
Hath part in me nor mine :  
Strong lords are these of the living earth  
And loveless lords of thine.

“ But I that know nor lord nor life  
More sure than storm or spray,  
Whose breath is made of sport and strife,  
Whereon shall I find stay ? ”

“ And wouldest thou change thy doom with me,  
 Full fain with thee would I :  
 For the life that lightens and lifts the sea  
 Is more than earth or sky.

“ And what if the day of doubt and doom  
 Shall save nor smite not me ?  
 I would not rise from the slain world's tomb  
 If there be no more sea.

“ Take he my soul that gave my soul,  
 And give it thee to keep ;  
 And me, while seas and stars shall roll  
 Thy life that falls on sleep.”

That word went up through the mirk mid sky,  
 And even to God's own ear :  
 And the Lord was ware of the keen twin cry,  
 And wroth was he to hear.

He 's tane the soul of the unsained child  
 That fled to death from birth ;  
 He 's tane the light of the wan sea wild,  
 And bid it burn on earth.

He 's given the ghaist of the babe new-born  
 The gift of the water-sprite,  
 To ride on revel from morn to morn  
 And roll from night to night

He 's given the sprite of the wild wan sea  
 The gift of the new-born man,  
 A soul for ever to bide and be  
 When the years have filled their span.

When a year was gone and a year was come,  
 O loud and loud cried they—  
 “ For the lee-lang year thou hast held us dumb  
 Take now thy gifts away ! ”

O loud and lang they cried on him,  
 And sair and sair they prayed :  
 “ Is the face of thy grace as the night's face grim  
 For those thy wrath has made ? ”

A cry more bitter than tears of men  
 From the rim of the dim grey sea ;—  
 “ Give me my living soul again,  
 The soul thou gavest me,  
 The doom and the dole of kindly men,  
 To bide my weird and be ! ”

A cry more keen from the wild low land  
 Than the wail of waves that roll ;—  
 “ Take back the gift of a loveless hand,  
 Thy gift of doom and dole,  
 The weird of men that bide on land ;  
 Take from me, take my soul ! ”

The hands that smite are the hands that spare ;  
 They build and break the tomb ;  
 They turn to darkness and dust and air  
 The fruits of the waste earth's womb ;  
 But never the gift of a granted prayer,  
 The dole of a spoken doom.

Winds may change at a word unheard,  
 But none may change the tides :  
 The prayer once heard is as God's own word ;  
 The doom once dealt abides.

1108 THE BALLAD OF DEAD MEN'S BAY

And ever a cry goes up by day,  
And ever a wail by night ;  
And nae ship comes by the weary bay  
But her shipmen hear them wail and pray,  
And see with earthly sight  
The twofold flames of the twin lights play  
Where the sea-banks green and the sea-floods grey  
Are proud of peril and fain of prey,  
And the sand quakes ever ; and ill fare they  
That look upon that light.

## DEDICATION

1893

THE sea of the years that endure not  
 Whose tide shall endure till we die  
 And know what the seasons assure not,  
 If death be or life be a lie,  
 Sways hither the spirit and thither,  
 A waif in the swing of the sea  
 Whose wrecks are of memories that wither  
 As leaves of a tree.

We hear not and hail not with greeting  
 The sound of the wings of the years,  
 The storm of the sound of them beating,  
 That none till it pass from him hears :  
 But tempest nor calm can imperil  
 The treasures that fade not or fly ;  
 Change bids them not change and be sterile,  
 Death bids them not die.

Hearts plighted in youth to the royal  
 High service of hope and of song,  
 Sealed fast for endurance as loyal,  
 And proved of the years as they throng,

## DEDICATION

Conceive not, believe not, and fear not  
That age may be other than youth ;  
That faith and that friendship may hear not  
And utter not truth.

Not yesterday's light nor to-morrow's  
Gleams nearer or clearer than gleams,  
Though joys be forgotten and sorrows  
Forgotten as changes of dreams,  
The dawn of the days unforgotten  
That noon could eclipse not or slay,  
Whose fruits were as children begotten  
Of dawn upon day.

The years that were flowerful and fruitless,  
The years that were fruitful and dark,  
The hopes that were radiant and rootless,  
The hopes that were winged for their mark,  
Lie soft in the sepulchres fashioned  
Of hours that arise and subside,  
Absorbed and subdued and impassioned,  
In pain or in pride.

But far in the night that entombs them  
The starshine as sunshine is strong,  
And clear through the cloud that resumes them  
Remembrance, a light and a song,  
Rings lustrous as music and hovers  
As birds that impend on the sea,  
And thoughts that their prison-house covers  
Arise and are free.

Forgetfulness deep as a prison  
Holds days that are dead for us fast

Till the sepulchre sees rearisen  
The spirit whose reign is the past,  
Disentrammelled of darkness, and kindled  
With life that is mightier than death,  
When the life that obscured it has dwindled  
And passed as a breath.

But time nor oblivion may darken  
Remembrance whose name will be joy  
While memory forgets not to hearken,  
While manhood forgets not the boy  
Who heard and exulted in hearing  
The songs of the sunrise of youth  
Ring radiant above him, unfearing  
And joyous as truth.

Truth, winged and enkindled with rapture  
And sense of the radiance of yore,  
Fulfilled you with power to recapture  
What never might singer before—  
The life, the delight, and the sorrow  
Of troubrous and chivalrous years  
That knew not of night or of morrow.  
Of hopes or of fears.

But wider the wing and the vision  
That quicken the spirit have spread  
Since memory beheld with derision  
Man's hope to be more than his dead.  
From the mists and the snows and the thunders  
Your spirit has brought for us forth  
Light, music, and joy in the wonders  
And charms of the north.

## DEDICATION

The wars and the woes and the glories  
That quicken and lighten and rain  
From the clouds of its chronicled stories,  
The passion, the pride, and the pain,  
Whose echoes were mute and the token  
Was lost of the spells that they spake,  
Rise bright at your bidding, unbroken  
Of ages that break.

For you, and for none of us other,  
Time is not : the dead that must live  
Hold commune with you as a brother  
By grace of the life that you give.  
The heart that was in them is in you,  
Their soul in your spirit endures :  
The strength of their song is the sinew  
Of this that is yours.

Hence is it that life, everlasting  
As light and as music, abides  
In the sound of the surge of it, casting  
Sound back to the surge of the tides,  
Till sons of the sons of the Norsemen  
Watch, hurtling to windward and lee,  
Round England, unbacked of her horsemen,  
The steeds of the sea.

# **A CHANNEL PASSAGE**

**AND OTHER POEMS**



IN MEMORY  
OF  
WILLIAM MORRIS  
AND  
EDWARD BURNE JONES



## A CHANNEL PASSAGE

1855

FORTH from Calais, at dawn of night, when sunset  
 summer on autumn shone,  
 Fared the steamer alert and loud through seas whence  
 only the sun was gone.  
 Soft and sweet as the sky they smiled, and bade man  
 welcome : a dim sweet hour  
 Gleamed and whispered in wind and sea, and heaven  
 was fair as a field in flower  
 Stars fulfilled the desire of the darkling world as with  
 music : the starbright air  
 Made the face of the sea, if aught may make the face  
 of the sea, more fair.

Whence came change ? Was the sweet night weary  
 of rest ? What anguish awoke in the dark ?  
 Sudden, sublime, the strong storm spake : we heard  
 the thunders as hounds that bark.  
 Lovelier if aught may be lovelier than stars, we saw  
 the lightnings exalt the sky,  
 Living and lustrous and rapturous as love that is born  
 but to quicken and lighten and die.

Heaven's own heart at its highest of delight found  
utterance in music and semblance in fire :  
Thunder on thunder exulted, rejoicing to live and to  
satiate the night's desire.

And the night was alive and anhungered of life as a  
tiger from toils cast free :  
And a rapture of rage made joyous the spirit and  
strength of the soul of the sea.  
All the weight of the wind bore down on it, freighted  
with death for fraught :  
And the keen waves kindled and quickened as things  
transfigured or things distraught.  
And madness fell on them laughing and leaping ; and  
madness came on the wind :  
And the might and the light and the darkness of  
storm were as storm in the heart of Ind.  
Such glory, such terror, such passion, as lighten and  
harrow the far fierce East,  
Rang, shone, spake, shuddered around us : the night  
was an altar with death for priest.  
The channel that sunders England from shores where  
never was man born free  
Was clothed with the likeness and thrilled with the  
strength and the wrath of a tropic sea.  
As a wild steed ramps in rebellion, and rears till it  
swerves from a backward fall,  
The strong ship struggled and reared, and her deck  
was upright as a sheer cliff's wall.  
Stern and prow plunged under, alternate : a glimpse,  
a recoil, a breath,  
And she sprang as the life in a god made man would  
spring at the throat of death.  
Three glad hours, and it seemed not an hour of  
supreme and supernal joy,

Filled full with delight that revives in remembrance  
a sea-bird's heart in a boy.  
For the central crest of the night was cloud that  
thundered and flamed, sublime  
As the splendour and song of the soul everlasting  
that quickens the pulse of time.  
The glory beholding of man in a vision, the music of  
light overheard,  
The rapture and radiance of battle, the life that  
abides in the fire of a word,  
In the midmost heaven enkindled, was manifest far  
on the face of the sea,  
And the rage in the roar of the voice of the waters  
was heard but when heaven breathed free.  
Far eastward, clear of the covering of cloud, the sky  
laughed out into light  
From the rims of the storm to the sea's dark edge  
with flames that were flowerlike and white.  
The leaping and luminous blossoms of live sheet  
lightning that laugh as they fade  
From the cloud's black base to the black wave's brim  
rejoiced in the light they made.  
Far westward, throned in a silent sky, where life was  
in lustrous tune,  
Shone, sweeter and surer than morning or evening,  
the steadfast smile of the moon.  
The limitless heaven that enshrined them was lovelier  
than dreams may behold, and deep  
As life or as death, revealed and transfigured, may  
shine on the soul through sleep.  
All glories of toil and of triumph and passion and  
pride that it yearns to know  
Bore witness there to the soul of its likeness and  
kinship, above and below.

The joys of the lightnings, the songs of the thunders,  
the strong sea's labour and rage,  
Were tokens and signs of the war that is life and is  
joy for the soul to wage.  
No thought strikes deeper or higher than the heights  
and the depths that the night made bare,  
Illimitable, infinite, awful and joyful, alive in the  
summit of air--  
Air stilled and thrilled by the tempest that thundered  
between its reign and the sea's,  
Rebellious, rapturous, and transient as faith or as  
terror that bows men's knees.  
No love sees loftier and fairer the form of its godlike  
vision in dreams  
Than the world shone then, when the sky and the  
sea were as love for a breath's length seems--  
One utterly, mingled and mastering and mastered  
and laughing with love that subsides  
As the glad mad night sank panting and satiate with  
storm, and released the tides.  
In the dense mid channel the steam-souled ship hung  
hovering, assailed and withheld  
As a soul born royal, if life or if death be against it,  
is thwarted and quelled.  
As the glories of myriads of glowworms in lustrous  
grass on a boundless lawn  
Were the glories of flames phosphoric that made of  
the water a light like dawn.  
A thousand Phosphors, a thousand Hespers, awoke  
in the churning sea,  
And the swift soft hiss of them living and dying was  
clear as a tune could be;  
As a tune that is played by the fingers of death on  
the keys of life or of sleep,

Audible alway alive in the storm, too fleet for a dream  
to keep :  
Too fleet, too sweet for a dream to recover and  
thought to remember awake :  
Light subtler and swifter than lightning, that whis-  
pers and laughs in the live storm's wake,  
In the wild bright wake of the storm, in the dense  
loud heart of the labouring hour,  
A harvest of stars by the storm's hand reaped, each  
fair as a star-shaped flower.  
And sudden and soft as the passing of sleep is the  
passing of tempest seemed  
When the light and the sound of it sank, and the  
glory was gone as a dream half dreamed.  
The glory, the terror, the passion that made of the  
midnight a miracle, died,  
Not slain at a stroke, nor in gradual reluctance abated  
of power and of pride ;  
With strong swift subsidence, awful as power that is  
wearied of power upon earth,  
As a God that were wearied of power upon heaven,  
and were fain of a new God's birth,  
The might of the night subsided : the tyranny kindled  
in darkness fell :  
And the sea and the sky put off them the rapture and  
radiance of heaven and of hell.  
The waters, heaving and hungering at heart, made  
way, and were wellnigh fain,  
For the ship that had fought them, and wrestled, and  
revelled in labour, to cease from her pain.  
And an end was made of it : only remembrance en-  
dures of the glad loud strife ;  
And the sense that a rapture so royal may come not  
again in the passage of life.

## THE LAKE OF GAUBE

THE sun is lord and god, sublime, serene,  
 And sovereign on the mountains : earth and air  
 Lie prone in passion, blind with bliss unseen  
 By force of sight and might of rapture, fair  
 As dreams that die and know not what they were.  
 The lawns, the gorges, and the peaks, are one  
 Glad glory, thrilled with sense of unison  
 In strong compulsive silence of the sun.

Flowers dense and keen as midnight stars afame  
 And living things of light like flames in flower  
 That glance and flash as though no hand might tame  
 Lightnings whose life outshone their stormlit hour  
 And played and laughed on earth, with all their  
 power  
 Gone, and with all their joy of life made long  
 And harmless as the lightning life of song,  
 Shine sweet like stars when darkness feels them  
 strong.

The deep mild purple flaked with moonbright gold  
 That makes the scales seem flowers of hardened  
 light,

The flamelike tongue, the feet that noon leaves cold,  
The kindly trust in man, when once the sight  
Grew less than strange, and faith bade fear take  
flight,  
Outlive the little harmless life that shone  
And gladdened eyes that loved it, and was gone  
Ere love might fear that fear had looked thereon.

Fear held the bright thing hateful, even as fear,  
Whose name is one with hate and horror, saith  
That heaven, the dark deep heaven of water near,  
Is deadly deep as hell and dark as death.  
The rapturous plunge that quickens blood and  
breath  
With pause more sweet than passion, ere they strive  
To raise again the limbs that yet would dive  
Deeper, should there have slain the soul alive.

As the bright salamander in fire of the noonshine  
exults and is glad of his day,  
The spirit that quickens my body rejoices to pass  
from the sunlight away,  
To pass from the glow of the mountainous flowerage,  
the high multitudinous bloom,  
Far down through the fathomless night of the water,  
the gladness of silence and gloom.  
Death-dark and delicious as death in the dream of a  
lover and dreamer may be,  
It clasps and encompasses body and soul with delight  
to be living and free :  
Free utterly now, though the freedom endure but the  
space of a perilous breath,  
And living, though girdled about with the darkness  
and coldness and strangeness of death :

Each limb and each pulse of the body rejoicing, each  
nerve of the spirit at rest,  
All sense of the soul's life rapture, a passionate peace  
in its blindness blest.  
So plunges the downward swimmer, embraced of the  
water unfathomed of man,  
The darkness unplummeted, icier than seas in mid-  
winter, for blessing or ban ;  
And swiftly and sweetly, when strength and breath  
fall short, and the dive is done,  
Shoots up as a shaft from the dark depth shot, sped  
straight into sight of the sun ;  
And sheer through the snow-soft water, more dark  
than the roof of the pines above,  
Strikes forth, and is glad as a bird whose flight is  
impelled and sustained of love.  
As a sea-mew's love of the sea-wind breasted and  
ridden for rapture's sake  
Is the love of his body and soul for the darkling  
delight of the soundless lake :  
As the silent speed of a dream too living to live for a  
thought's space more  
Is the flight of his limbs through the still strong chill  
of the darkness from shore to shore.  
Might life be as this is and death be as life that casts  
off time as a robe,  
The likeness of infinite heaven were a symbol revealed  
of the lake of Gaube.

Whose thought has fathomed and measured  
The darkness of life and of death,  
The secret within them treasured,  
The spirit that is not breath ?

Whose vision has yet beholden  
The splendour of death and of life ?  
Though sunset as dawn be golden,  
Is the word of them peace, not strife ?  
Deep silence answers : the glory  
We dream of may be but a dream,  
And the sun of the soul wax hoary  
As ashes that show not a gleam.  
But well shall it be with us ever  
Who drive through the darkness here.  
If the soul that we live by never,  
For aught that a lie saith, fear.

## THE PROMISE OF THE HAWTHORN

SPRING sleeps and stirs and trembles with desire  
    Pure as a babe's that nestles toward the breast.  
The world, as yet an all unstricken lyre,  
    With all its chords alive and all at rest,  
Feels not the sun's hand yet, but feels his breath  
    And yearns for love made perfect. Man and bird,  
Thrilled through with hope of life that casts out death,  
    Wait with a rapturous patience till his word  
Speak heaven, and flower by flower and tree by tree  
    Give back the silent strenuous utterance. Earth,  
Alive awhile and joyful as the sea,  
    Laughs not aloud in joy too deep for mirth,  
Presageful of perfection of delight,  
    Till all the unborn green buds be born in white.

## HAWTHORN TIDE

## I

DAWN is alive in the world, and the darkness of  
heaven and of earth  
Subsides in the light of a smile more sweet than the  
loud noon's mirth,  
Spring lives as a babe lives, glad and divine as the  
sun, and unsure  
If aught so divine and so glad may be worshipped  
and loved and endure.  
A soft green glory suffuses the love-lit earth with  
delight,  
And the face of the noon is fair as the face of the star-  
clothed night.  
Earth knows not and doubts not at heart of the  
glories again to be :  
Sleep doubts not and dreams not how sweet shall the  
waking beyond her be.  
A whole white world of revival awaits May's whisper  
awhile,  
Abides and exults in the bud as a soft hushed laugh  
in a smile.  
As a maid's mouth laughing with love and subdued  
for the love's sake, May  
Shines and withholds for a little the word she revives  
to say.

When the clouds and the winds and the sunbeams  
are warring and strengthening with joy that  
they live,

Spring, from reluctance enkindled to rapture, from  
slumber to strife,

Stirs, and repents, and is winter, and weeps, and  
awakes as the frosts forgive,

And the dark chill death of the woodland is  
troubled, and dies into life.

And the honey of heaven, of the hives whence night  
feeds full on the springtide's breath,

Fills fuller the lips of the lustrous air with delight  
in the dawn :

Each blossom enkindling with love that is life and  
subsides with a smile into death

Arises and lightens and sets as a star from her  
sphere withdrawn.

Not sleep, in the rapture of radiant dreams, when  
sundawn smiles on the night,

Shows earth so sweet with a splendour and fra-  
grance of life that is love :

Each blade of the glad live grass, each bud that  
receives or rejects the light,

Salutes and responds to the marvel of Maytime  
around and above.

Joy gives thanks for the sight and the savour of  
heaven, and is humbled

With awe that exults in thanksgiving : the towers  
of the flowers of the trees

Shine sweeter than snows that the hand of the season  
has melted and crumbled,

And fair as the foam that is lesser of life than the  
loveliest of these.

But the sense of a life more lustrous with joy and  
 enkindled of glory  
 Than man's was ever or may be, and briefer than  
 joys most brief,  
 Bids man's heart bend and adore, be the man's head  
 golden or hoary,  
 As it leapt but a breath's time since and saluted  
 the flower and the leaf.  
 The rapture that springs into love at the sight of the  
 world's exultation  
 Takes not a sense of rebuke from the sense of  
 triumphant awe :  
 But the spirit that quickens the body fulfils it with  
 mute adoration,  
 And the knees would fain bow down as the eyes that  
 rejoiced and saw.

## II

Fair and sublime as the face of the dawn is the  
 splendour of May,  
 But the sky's and the sea's joy fades not as earth's  
 pride passes away.  
 Yet hardly the sun's first lightning or laughter of  
 love on the sea  
 So humbles the heart into worship that knows not or  
 doubts if it be  
 As the first full glory beholden again of the life new-  
 born  
 That hails and applauds with inaudible music the  
 season of morn.  
 A day's length since, and it was not : a night's length  
 more, and the sun  
 Salutes and enkindles a world of delight as a strange  
 world won.

A new life answers and thrills to the kiss of the young  
strong year,  
And the glory we see is as music we hear not, and  
dream that we hear.  
From blossom to blossom the live tune kindles, from  
tree to tree,  
And we know not indeed if we hear not the song of  
the life we see.

For the first blithe day that beholds it and worships  
and cherishes cannot but sing  
With a louder and lustier delight in the sun and  
the sunlit earth  
Than the joy of the days that beheld but the soft  
green dawn of the slow faint spring  
Glad and afraid to be glad, and subdued in a shame-  
fast mirth.  
When the first bright knoll of the woodland world  
laughs out into fragrant light,  
The year's heart changes and quickens with sense  
of delight in desire,  
And the kindling desire is one with thanksgiving for  
utter fruition of sight,  
For sight and for sense of a world that the sun  
finds meet for his lyre.  
Music made of the morning that smites from the  
chords of the mute world song  
Trembles and quickens and lightens, unfelt, un-  
beholden, unheard,  
From blossom on blossom that climbs and exults in  
the strength of the sun grown strong,  
And answers the word of the wind of the spring  
with the sun's own word.

Hard on the skirt of the deep soft copses that spring  
refashions,  
Triumphs and towers to the height of the crown of  
a wildwood tree  
One royal hawthorn, sublime and serene as the joy  
that impassions  
Awe that exults in thanksgiving for sight of the  
grace we see,  
The grace that is given of a god that abides for a  
season, mysterious  
And merciful, fervent and fugitive, seen and un-  
known and adored :  
His presence is felt in the light and the fragrance,  
elate and imperious,  
His laugh and his breath in the blossom are love's,  
the beloved soul's lord.  
For surely the soul if it loves is beloved of the god as  
a lover  
Whose love is not all unaccepted, a worship not  
utterly vain :  
So full, so deep is the joy that revives for the soul  
to recover  
Yearly, beholden of hope and of memory in sun-  
shine and rain.

## III

Wonder and love stand silent, stricken at heart and  
stilled.  
But yet is the cup of delight and of worship un-  
pledged and unfilled.  
A handsbreadth hence leaps up, laughs out as an  
angel crowned,  
A strong full fountain of flowers overflowing above  
and around.

The boughs and the blossoms in triumph salute with  
adoring mirth

The womb that bare them, the glad green mother,  
the sunbright earth.

Downward sweeping, as song subsides into silence,  
none

May hear what sound is the word's they speak to the  
brooding sun.

None that hearken may hear : man may but pass and  
adore,

And humble his heart in thanksgiving for joy that is  
now no more.

And sudden, afront and ahead of him, joy is alive  
and aflame

On the shrine whose incense is given of the godhead,  
again the same

Pale and pure as a maiden secluded in secret and  
cherished with fear,

One sweet glad hawthorn smiles as it shrinks  
under shelter, screened

By two strong brethren whose bounteous blossom  
outsoars it, year after year,

While earth still cleaves to the live spring's breast  
as a babe unweaned.

Never was amaranth fairer in fields where heroes of  
old found rest,

Never was asphodel sweeter : but here they endure  
not long,

Though ever the sight that salutes them again and  
adores them awhile is blest,

And the heart is a hymn, and the sense is a soul,  
and the soul is a song.

Alone on a dyke's trenched edge, and afar from the  
blossoming wildwood's verge,  
Laughs and lightens a sister, triumphal in love-lit  
pride ;  
Clothed round with the sun, and inviolate : her  
blossoms exult as the springtide surge,  
When the wind and the dawn enkindle the snows  
of the shoreward tide.

Hardly the worship of old that rejoiced as it knelt in  
the vision  
Shown of the God new-born whose breath is the  
spirit of spring  
Hailed ever with love more strong and defiant of  
death's derision  
A joy more perfect than here we mourn for as May  
' takes wing.  
Time gives it and takes it again and restores it : the  
glory, the wonder,  
The triumph of lustrous blossom that makes of the  
steep sweet bank  
One visible marvel of music inaudible, over and  
under,  
Attuned as in heaven, pass hence and return for the  
sun to thank.  
The stars and the sun give thanks for the glory  
bestowed and beholden,  
For the gladness they give and rejoice in, the  
night and the dawn and the day :  
But nought they behold when the world is aflower  
and the season is golden  
Makes answer as meet and as sweet as the flower  
that itself is May.

## THE PASSING OF THE HAWTHORN

THE coming of the hawthorn brings on earth  
 Heaven : all the spring speaks out in one sweet  
 word,  
 And heaven grows gladder, knowing that earth  
 has heard.

Ere half the flowers are jubilant in birth,  
 The splendour of the laughter of their mirth  
 Dazzles delight with wonder : man and bird  
 Rejoice and worship, stilled at heart and stirred  
 With rapture girt about with awe for girth.

The passing of the hawthorn takes away  
 Heaven : all the spring falls dumb, and all the soul  
 Sinks down in man for sorrow. Night and day  
 Forego the joy that made them one and whole.  
 The change that falls on every starry spray  
 Bids, flower by flower, the knell of springtime toll.

## TO A BABY KINSWOMAN

Love, whose light thrills heaven and earth,  
Smiles and weeps upon thy birth,  
Child, whose mother's love-lit eyes  
Watch thee but from Paradise.  
Sweetest sight that earth can give,  
Sweetest light of eyes that live,  
Ours must needs, for hope withdrawn,  
Hail with tears thy soft spring dawn.  
Light of hope whose star hath set,  
Light of love whose sun lives yet,  
Holier, happier, heavenlier love  
Breathes about thee, burns above,  
Surely, sweet, than ours can be,  
Shed from eyes we may not see,  
Though thine own may see them shine  
Night and day, perchance, on thine.  
Sun and moon that lighten earth  
Seem not fit to bless thy birth :  
Scarce the very stars we know  
Here seem bright enough to show  
Whence in unimagined skies  
Glows the vigil of such eyes.  
Theirs whose heart is as a sea  
Swoln with sorrowing love of thee  
Fain would share with thine the sight  
Seen alone of babes aright,

Watched of eyes more sweet than flowers  
Sleeping or awake : but ours  
Can but deem or dream or guess  
Thee not wholly motherless.  
Might they see or might they know  
What nor faith nor hope may show,  
We whose hearts yearn toward thee now  
Then were blest and wise as thou.  
Had we half thy knowledge,—had  
Love such wisdom,—grief were glad,  
Surely, lit by grace of thee ;  
Life were sweet as death may be.  
Now the law that lies on men  
Bids us mourn our dead : but then  
Heaven and life and earth and death,  
Quickened as by God's own breath,  
All were turned from sorrow and strife :  
Earth and death were heaven and life.  
All too far are then and now  
Sundered : none may be as thou.  
Yet this grace is ours—a sign  
Of that goodlier grace of thine,  
Sweet, and thine alone—to see  
Heaven, and heaven's own love, in thee.  
Bless them, then, whose eyes caress  
Thee, as only thou canst bless.  
Comfort, faith, assurance, love,  
Shine around us, brood above,  
Fear grows hope, and hope grows wise,  
Thrilled and lit by children's eyes.  
Yet in ours the tears unshed,  
Child, for hope that death leaves dead,  
Needs must burn and tremble ; thou  
Knowest not, seest not, why nor how,

More than we know whence or why  
Comes on babes that laugh and lie  
Half asleep, in sweet-lipped scorn,  
Light of smiles outlightening morn,  
Whence enkindled as is earth  
By the dawn's less radiant birth  
All the body soft and sweet  
Smiles on us from face to feet  
When the rose-red hands would fain  
Reach the rose-red feet in vain.  
Eyes and hands that worship thee  
Watch and tend, adore and see  
All these heavenly sights, and give  
Thanks to see and love and live.  
Yet, of all that hold thee dear,  
Sweet, the dearest smiles not here.  
Thine alone is now the grace,  
Haply, still to see her face ;  
Thine, thine only now the sight  
Whence we dream thine own takes light.  
Yet, though faith and hope live blind,  
Yet they live in heart and mind  
Strong and keen as truth may be :  
Yet, though blind as grief were we  
Inly for a weeping-while,  
Sorrow's self before thy smile  
Smiles and softens, knowing that yet,  
Far from us though heaven be set,  
Love, bowed down for thee to bless,  
Dares not call thee motherless.



# THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

ἐσ τὸ πᾶν δέ σοι λέγω,  
βωμὸν αἰδεσαι δίκας·  
μηδέ νιν  
κέρδος ἵδων ἀθέφ ποδὶ λὰξ ἀτίσης·  
ποινὰ γὰρ ἐπέσται.  
κύριον μένει τέλος.

Æsch. *Eum.* 538-544

πάρα τὸ φῶς ἵδεῖν.

Æsch. *Cho.* 972

## THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

## I

LIGHT and night, whose clouds and glories change  
     and mingle and divide,  
 Veil the truth whereof they witness, show the truth  
     of things they hide.  
 Through the darkness and the splendour of the  
     centuries, loud or dumb,  
 Shines and wanes and shines the spirit, lit with love  
     of life to come.  
 Man, the soul made flesh, that knows not death from  
     life, and fain would know,  
 Sees the face of time change colour as its tides recoil  
     and flow.  
 All his hope and fear and faith and doubt, if aught at  
     all they be,  
 Live the life of clouds and sunbeams, born of heaven  
     or earth or sea.  
 All are buoyed and blown and brightened by their  
     hour's evasive breath :  
 All subside and quail and darken when their hour is  
     done to death.  
 Yet, ere faith, a wandering water, froze and curdled  
     into creeds,  
 Earth, elate as heaven, adored the light that quickens  
     dreams to deeds.

## 1142 THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Invisible : eye hath not seen it, and ear hath not  
heard as the spirit hath heard  
From the shrine that is lit not of sunlight or starlight  
the sound of a limitless word.  
And visible : none that hath eyes to behold what the  
spirit must perish or see  
Can choose but behold it and worship : a shrine that  
if light were as darkness would be.  
Of cloud and of change is the form of the fashion that  
man may behold of it wrought :  
Of iron and truth is the mystic mid altar, where  
worship is none but of thought.  
No prayer may go up to it, climbing as incense of  
gladness or sorrow may climb :  
No rapture of music may ruffle the silence that guards  
it, and hears not of time.  
As the winds of the wild blind ages alternate in  
passion of light and of cloud,  
So changes the shape of the veil that enshrouds it  
with darkness and light for a shroud.  
And the winds and the clouds and the suns fall silent,  
and fade out of hearing or sight,  
And the shrine stands fast and is changed not, whose  
likeness was changed as a cloud in the night.

All the storms of time, and wrath of many winds,  
may carve no trace  
On the viewless altar, though the veil bear many a  
name and face :  
Many a live God's likeness woven, many a scripture  
dark with awe,  
Bids the veil seem verier iron than the word of life's  
own law.

Till the might of change hath rent it with a rushing  
wind in twain,  
Stone or steel it seems, whereon the wrath of chance  
is wreaked in vain :  
Stone or steel, and all behind it or beyond its lifted  
sign  
Cloud and vapour, no subsistence of a change-  
unstricken shrine.  
God by god flits past in thunder, till his glories turn  
to shades :  
God to god bears wondering witness how his gospel  
flames and fades.  
More was each of these, while yet they were, than  
man their servant seemed :  
Dead are all of these, and man survives who made  
them while he dreamed.

Yet haply or surely, if vision were surer than theirs  
who rejoiced that they saw,  
Man might not but see, through the darkness of  
godhead, the light that is surely and law.  
On the stone that the close-drawn cloud which veils  
it awhile makes cloudlike stands  
The word of the truth everlasting, unspoken of  
tongues and unwritten of hands.  
By the sunbeams and storms of the centuries engraven,  
and approved of the soul as it reads,  
It endures as a token dividing the light from the  
darkness of dreams and of deeds.  
The faces of gods on the face of it carven, or gleam-  
ing behind and above,  
Star-glorified Uranus, thunderous Jehovah, for terror  
or worship or love,

## 1144 THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Change, wither, and brighten as flowers that the wind  
of eternity sheds upon time,  
All radiant and transient and awful and mortal, and  
leave it unmarred and sublime.  
As the tides that return and recede are the fears and  
the hopes of the centuries that roll,  
Requenched and rekindled : but strong as the sun is  
the sense of it shrined in the soul.

## II

In the days when time was not, in the time when days  
were none,  
Ere sorrow had life to lot, ere earth gave thanks for  
the sun,  
Ere man in his darkness waking adored what the  
soul in him could,  
And the manifold God of his making was manifest  
evil and good,  
One law from the dim beginning abode and abides in  
the end,  
In sight of him sorrowing and sinning with none but  
his faith for friend.  
Dark were the shadows around him, and darker the  
glories above,  
Ere light from beyond them found him, and bade him  
for love's sake love.  
About him was darkness, and under and over him  
darkness : the night  
That conceived him and bore him had thunder for  
utterance and lightning for light.  
The dust of death was the dust of the ways that the  
tribes of him trod :

And he knew not if just or unjust were the might of  
the mystery of God.

Strange horror and hope, strange faith and unfaith,  
were his boon and his bane :

And the God of his trust was the wraith of the soul  
or the ghost of it slain.

A curse was on death as on birth, and a Presence  
that shone as a sword

Shed menace from heaven upon earth that beheld  
him, and hailed him her Lord.

Sublime and triumphant as fire or as lightning, he  
kindled the skies,

And withered with dread the desire that would look  
on the light of his eyes.

Earth shuddered with worship, and knew not if hell  
were not hot in her breath ;

If birth were not sin, and the dew of the morning  
the sweat of her death.

The watchwords of evil and good were unspoken of  
men and unheard :

They were shadows that willed as he would, that  
were made and unmade by his word.

His word was darkness and light, and a wisdom that  
makes men mad

Sent blindness upon them for sight, that they saw but  
and heard as he bade.

Cast forth and corrupt from the birth by the crime of  
creation, they stood

Convicted of evil on earth by the grace of a God found  
good.

The grace that enkindled and quickened the darkness  
of hell with flame

Bade man; though the soul in him sickened, obey,  
and give praise to his name.

The still small voice of the spirit whose life is as  
plague's hot breath  
Bade man shed blood, and inherit the life of the  
kingdom of death.

" Bring now for blood-offering thy son to mine altar,  
and bind him and slay,  
That the sin of my bidding be done " : and the soul  
in the slave said, " Yea."  
Yea, not nay, was the word : and the sacrifice offered  
withal  
Was neither of beast nor of bird, but the soul of a  
man, God's thrall.  
And the word of his servant spoken was fire, and the  
light of a sword,  
When the bondage of Israel was broken, and Sinai  
shrank from the Lord.  
With splendour of slaughter and thunder of song as  
the sound of the sea  
Were the foes of him stricken in sunder and silenced  
as storms that flee.  
Terror and trust and the pride of the chosen, approved  
of his choice,  
Saw God in the whirlwind ride, and rejoiced as the  
winds rejoice.  
Subdued and exalted and kindled and quenched by  
the sense of his might,  
Faith flamed and exulted and dwindled, and saw  
not, and clung to the sight.  
The wastes of the wilderness brightened and trembled  
with rapture and dread  
When the word of him thundered and lightened and  
spake through the quick and the dead.

The chant of the prophetess, louder and loftier than  
tempest and wave,  
Rang triumph more ruthless and prouder than death,  
and profound as the grave.  
And sweet as the moon's word spoken in smiles that  
the blown clouds mar  
The psalmist's witness in token arose as the speech  
of a star.  
Starlight supreme, and the tender desire of the moon,  
were as one  
To rebuke with compassion the splendour and strength  
of the godlike sun.  
God softened and changed : and the word of his  
chosen, a fire at the first,  
Bade man, as a beast or a bird, now slake at the  
springs his thirst.  
The souls that were sealed unto death as the bones  
of the dead lie sealed  
Rose thrilled and redeemed by the breath of the dawn  
on the flame-lit field.  
The glories of darkness, cloven with music of thunder,  
shrank  
As the web of the word was unwoven that spake, and  
the soul's tide sank.  
And the starshine of midnight that covered Arabia  
with light as a robe  
Waxed fiery with utterance that hovered and flamed  
through the whirlwind on Job.  
And prophet to prophet and vision to vision made  
answer sublime,  
Till the valley of doom and decision was merged in  
the tides of time.

## III

Then, soft as the dews of night,  
 As the star of the sundawn bright,  
 As the heart of the sea's hymn deep,  
 And sweet as the balm of sleep,  
 Arose on the world a light  
 Too pure for the skies to keep

With music sweeter and stranger than heaven had  
 heard  
 When the dark east thrilled with light from a saviour's  
 word  
 And a God grew man to endure as a man and abide  
 The doom of the will of the Lord of the loud world's  
 tide,  
 Whom thunders utter, and tempest and darkness  
 hide,  
 With larger light than flamed from the peak whereon  
 Prometheus, bound as the sun to the world's wheel,  
 shone,  
 A presence passed and abode but on earth a span,  
 And love's own light as a river before him ran,  
 And the name of God for awhile upon earth was man.

O star that wast not and wast for the world a sun,  
 O light that was quenched of priests, and its work  
 undone,  
 O Word that wast not as man's or as God's; if God  
 Be Lord but of hosts whose tread was as death's that  
 trod  
 On souls that felt but his wrath as an unseen rod,

What word, what praise, what passion of hopeless  
prayer,  
May now rise up to thee, loud as in years that were,  
From years that gaze on the works of thy servants  
wrought  
While strength was in them to satiate the lust of  
thought  
That craved in thy name for blood as the quest it  
sought ?

From the dark high places of Rome  
Far over the westward foam  
God's heaven and the sun saw swell  
The fires of the high priest's hell,  
And shrank as they curled and clomb  
And revelled and ravaged and fell.

## IV

Yet was not the work of thy word all withered with  
wasting flame  
By the sons of the priests that had slain thee, whose  
evil was wrought in thy name.  
From the blood-sodden soil that was blasted with  
fires of the Church and her creed  
Sprang rarely but surely, by grace of thy spirit,  
a flower for a weed.  
Thy spirit, unfelt of thy priests who blasphemed  
thee, enthralled and enticed  
To deathward a child that was even as the child we  
behold in Christ.  
The Moors, they told her, beyond bright Spain and  
the strait brief sea,  
Dwelt blind in the light that for them was as darkness,  
and knew not thee.

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But the blood of the martyrs whose mission was  
witness for God, they said,  
Might raise to redemption the souls that were here,  
    in the sun's sight, dead.  
And the child rose up in the night, when the stars  
    were as friends that smiled,  
And sought her brother, and wakened the younger  
    and tenderer child.  
From the heaven of a child's glad sleep to the heaven  
    of the sight of her eyes  
He woke, and brightened and hearkened, and kindled  
    as stars that rise.  
And forth they fared together to die for the stranger's  
    sake,  
For the souls of the slayers that should slay them,  
    and turn from their sins, and wake.  
And the light of the love that lit them awhile on  
    a brief blind quest  
Shines yet on the tear-lit smile that salutes them,  
    belated and blest.

And the girl, full-grown to the stature of godhead in  
womanhood, spake  
The word that sweetens and lightens her creed for  
her great love's sake.  
From the godlike heart of Theresa the prayer above  
    all prayers heard,  
The cry as of God made woman, a sweet blind  
    wonderful word,  
Sprang sudden as flame, and kindled the darkness of  
    faith with love,  
And the hollow of hell from beneath shone, quickened  
    of heaven from above.

Yea, hell at her word grew heaven, as she prayed  
that if God thought well  
She there might stand in the gateway, that none  
might pass into hell.  
Not Hermes, guardian and guide, God, herald, and  
comforter, shed  
Such lustre of hope from the life of his light on the  
night of the dead.  
Not Pallas, wiser and mightier in mercy than Rome's  
God shone,  
Wore ever such raiment of love as the soul of a saint  
put on.  
So blooms as a flower of the darkness a star of the  
midnight born,  
Of the midnight's womb and the blackness of dark-  
ness, and flames like morn.  
Nor yet may the dawn extinguish or hide it, when  
churches and creeds  
Are withered and blasted with sunlight as poisonous  
and blossomless weeds.  
So springs and strives through the soil that the  
legions of darkness have trod,  
From the root that is man, from the soul in the body,  
the flower that is God.

Ages and creeds that drift  
Through change and cloud uplift  
The soul that soars and seeks her sovereign shrine,  
Her faith's veiled altar, there  
To find, when praise and prayer  
Fall baffled, if the darkness be divine.

## 1152 THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Lights change and shift through star and sun :  
Night, clothed with might of immemorial years, is one.

Day, born and slain of night,  
Hath hardly life in sight  
As she that bears and slays him and survives,  
And gives us back for one  
Cloud-thwarted fiery sun  
The myriad mysteries of the lambent lives  
Whose starry soundless music saith  
That light and life wax perfect even through night  
and death.

In vain had darkness heard  
Light speak the lustrous word  
That cast out faith in all save truth and love :  
In vain death's quickening rod  
Bade man rise up as God,  
Touched as with life unknown in heaven above :  
Fear turned his light of love to fire  
That wasted earth, yet might not slay the soul's  
desire.

Though death seem life, and night  
Bid fear call darkness light,  
Time, faith, and hope keep trust, through sorrow  
and shame,  
Till Christ, by Paul cast out,  
Return, and all the rout  
Of raging slaves whose prayer defiles his name  
Rush headlong to the deep, and die,  
And leave no sign to say that faith once heard them  
lie.

## VI

Since man, with a child's pride proud, and abashed  
 as a child and afraid,  
 Made God in his likeness, and bowed him to worship  
 the Maker he made,  
 No faith more dire hath enticed man's trust than the  
 saint's whose creed  
 Made Caiaphas one with Christ, that worms on the  
 cross might feed.  
 Priests gazed upon God in the eyes of a babe new-  
 born, and therein  
 Beheld not heaven, and the wise glad secret of love,  
 but sin.  
 Accursed of heaven, and baptized with the baptism  
 of hatred and hell,  
 They spat on the name they despised and adored as a  
 sign and a spell.  
 "Lord Christ, thou art God, and a liar: they were  
 children of wrath, not of grace,  
 Unbaptized, unredeemed from the fire they were born  
 for, who smiled in thy face."  
 Of such is the kingdom—he said it—of heaven: and  
 the heavenly word  
 Shall live when religion is dead, and when falsehood  
 is dumb shall be heard.  
 And the message of James and of John was as Christ's  
 and as love's own call:  
 But wrath passed sentence thereon when Annas  
 replied in Paul.  
 The dark old God who had slain him grew one with  
 the Christ he slew,  
 And poison was rank in the grain that with growth  
 of his gospel grew.

And the blackness of darkness brightened : and red  
in the heart of the flame  
Shone down, as a blessing that lightened, the curse  
of a new God's name.  
Through centuries of burning and trembling belief as  
a signal it shone,  
Till man, soul-sick of dissembling, bade fear and her  
frauds begone.  
God Cerberus yelps from his throats triune : but his  
day, which was night,  
Is quenched, with its stars and the notes of its night-  
birds, in silence and light.  
The flames of its fires and the psalms of their  
psalmists are darkened and dumb :  
Strong winter has withered the palms of his angels,  
and stricken them numb.  
God, father of lies, God, son of perdition, God, spirit  
of ill,  
Thy will that for ages was done is undone as a dead  
God's will.  
Not Mahomet's sword could slay thee, nor Borgia's  
or Calvin's praise :  
But the scales of the spirit that weigh thee are  
weighted with truth, and it slays.  
The song of the day of thy fury, when nature and  
death shall quail,  
Rings now as the thunders of Jewry, the ghost of a  
dead world's tale.  
That day and its doom foreseen and foreshadowed on  
earth, when thou,  
Lord God, wast lord of the keen dark season, are  
sport for us now.  
Thy claws were clipped and thy fangs plucked out by  
the hands that slew

Men, lovers of man, whose pangs bore witness if truth were true.

Man crucified rose again from the sepulchre builded to be

No grave for the souls of the men who denied thee, but, Lord, for thee.

When Bruno's spirit aspired from the flames that thy servants fed,

The spirit of faith was fired to consume thee and leave thee dead.

When the light of the sunlike eyes whence laughter lightened and flamed

Bade France and the world be wise, faith saw thee naked and shamed.

When wisdom deeper and sweeter than Rabelais veiled and revealed

Found utterance diviner and meeter for truth whence anguish is healed,

Whence fear and hate and belief in thee, fed by thy grace from above,

Fall stricken, and utmost grief takes light from the lustre of love,

When Shakespeare shone into birth, and the world he beheld grew bright,

Thy kingdom was ended on earth, and the darkness it shed was light.

In him all truth and the glory thereof and the power and the pride,

The song of the soul and her story, bore witness that fear had lied.

All hope, all wonder, all trust, all doubt that knows not of fear,

The love of the body, the lust of the spirit to see and to hear,

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All womanhood, fairer than love could conceive or  
desire or adore,  
All manhood, radiant above all heights that it held  
of yore,  
Lived by the life of his breath, with the speech of his  
soul's will spake,  
And the light lit darkness to death whence never the  
dead shall wake.  
For the light that lived in the sound of the song of  
his speech was one  
With the light of the wisdom that found earth's tune  
in the song of the sun ;  
His word with the word of the lord most high of us  
all on earth,  
Whose soul was a lyre and a sword, whose death  
was a deathless birth.  
Him too we praise as we praise our own who as he  
stand strong ;  
Him, *Æschylus*, ancient of days, whose word is the  
perfect song.  
When Caucasus showed to the sun and the sea what  
a God could endure,  
When wisdom and light were one, and the hands of  
the matricide pure,  
A song too subtle for psalmist or prophet of Jewry to  
know,  
Elate and profound as the calmest or stormiest of  
waters that flow,  
A word whose echoes were wonder and music of fears  
overcome,  
Bade Sinai bow, and the thunder of godhead on  
Horeb be dumb.  
The childless children of night, strong daughters of  
doom and dread,

The thoughts and the fears that smite the soul, and  
its life lies dead,  
Stood still and were quelled by the sound of his word  
and the light of his thought,  
And the God that in man lay bound was unbound  
from the bonds he had wrought.  
Dark fear of a lord more dark than the dreams of  
his worshippers knew  
Fell dead, and the corpse lay stark in the sunlight of  
truth shown true.

## VII

Time, and truth his child, though terror set earth  
and heaven at odds,  
See the light of manhood rise on the twilight of the  
Gods.  
Light is here for souls to see, though the stars of  
faith be dead :  
All the sea that yearned and trembled receives the  
sun instead.  
All the shadows on the spirit when fears and dreams  
were strong,  
All perdition, all redemption, blind rain-stars watched  
so long,  
Love whose root was fear, thanksgiving that cowered  
beneath the rod,  
Feel the light that heals and withers : night weeps  
upon her God.  
All the names wherein the incarnate Lord lived his  
day and died  
Fade from suns to stars, from stars into darkness un-  
described.

## 1158 THE ALTAR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Christ the man lives yet, remembered of man as  
    dreams that leave  
Light on eyes that wake and know not if memory  
    bid them grieve.  
Fire sublime as lightning shines, and exults in thunder  
    yet,  
Where the battle wields the name and the sword of  
    Mahomet.  
Far above all wars and gospels, all ebb and flow of  
    time,  
Lives the soul that speaks in silence, and makes mute  
    earth sublime.  
Still for her, though years and ages be blinded and  
    bedinned,  
Mazed with lightnings, crazed with thunders, life  
    rides and guides the wind.  
Death may live or death may die, and the truth be  
    light or night:  
Not for gain of heaven may man put away the rule  
    of right.

## A NEW YEAR'S EVE

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI DIED DECEMBER 29, 1894

THE stars are strong in the deeps of the lustrous  
 night,  
 Cold and splendid as death if his dawn be bright ;  
 Cold as the cast-off garb that is cold as clay,  
 Splendid and strong as a spirit intense as light.

A soul more sweet than the morning of new-born May  
 Has passed with the year that has passed from the  
 world away.

A song more sweet than the morning's first-born  
 song  
 Again will hymn not among us a new year's day.

Not here, not here shall the carol of joy grown strong  
 Ring rapture now, and uplift us, a spell-struck  
 throng,

From dream to vision of life that the soul may see  
 By death's grace only, if death do its trust no wrong.

Scarce yet the days and the starry nights are three  
 Since here among us a spirit abode as we,  
 Girt round with life that is fettered in bonds of  
 time,  
 And clasped with darkness about as is earth with sea.

And now, more high than the vision of souls may climb,  
The soul whose song was as music of stars that chime,  
Clothed round with life as of dawn and the mounting sun,  
Sings, and we know not here of the song sublime.

No word is ours of it now that the songs are done  
Whence here we drank of delight as in freedom won,  
In deep deliverance given from the bonds we bore.  
There is none to sing as she sang upon earth, not one.

We heard awhile : and for us who shall hear no more  
The sound as of waves of light on a starry shore  
Awhile bade brighten and yearn as a father's face  
The face of death, divine as in days of yore.

The grey gloom quickened and quivered : the sunless place  
Thrilled, and the silence deeper than time or space  
Seemed now not all everlasting. Hope grew strong,  
And love took comfort, given of the sweet song's grace.

Love that finds not on earth, where it finds but wrong,  
Love that bears not the bondage of years in throng  
Shone to show for her, higher than the years that mar,  
The life she looked and longed for as love must long.

Who knows? We know not. Afar, if the dead be  
far,  
Alive, if the dead be alive as the soul's works are,  
The soul whose breath was among us a heavenward  
song  
Sings, loves, and shines as it shines for us here a  
star.

## IN A ROSARY

THROUGH the low grey archway children's feet that  
pass

Quicken, glad to find the sweetest haunt of all.  
Brightest wildflowers gleaming deep in lustiest grass,  
Glorious weeds that glisten through the green sea's  
glass,

Match not now this marvel, born to fade and fall.

Roses like a rainbow wrought of roses rise  
Right and left and forward, shining toward the sun.  
Nay, the rainbow lit of sunshine droops and dies  
Ere we dream it hallows earth and seas and skies ;  
Ere delight may dream it lives, its life is done.

Round the border hemmed with high deep hedges  
round  
Go the children, peering over or between  
Where the dense bright oval wall of box inwound,  
Reared about the roses fast within it bound,  
Gives them grace to glance at glories else unseen.

Flower outlightening flower and tree outflowering tree  
Feed and fill the sense and spirit full with joy.  
Nought awhile they know of outer earth and sea :  
Here enough of joy it is to breathe and be :  
Here the sense of life is one for girl and boy.

Heaven above them, bright as children's eyes or dreams,

Earth about them, sweet as glad soft sleep can show  
Earth and sky and sea, a world that scarcely seems  
Even in children's eyes less fair than life that gleams  
Through the sleep that none but sinless eyes may know.

Near beneath, and near above, the terraced ways  
Wind or stretch and bask or blink against the sun.  
Hidden here from sight on soft or stormy days  
Lies and laughs with love toward heaven, at silent gaze,  
All the radiant rosary—all its flowers made one.

All the multitude of roses towering round  
Dawn and noon and night behold as one full flower,  
Fain of heaven and loved of heaven, curbed and crowned,  
Raised and reared to make this plot of earthly ground  
Heavenly, could but heaven endure on earth an hour.

Swept away, made nothing now for ever, dead,  
Still the rosary lives and shines on memory, free  
Now from fear of death or change as childhood, fled  
Years on years before its last live leaves were shed :  
None may mar it now, as none may stain the sea.

## THE HIGH OAKS

BARKING HALL, JULY 19TH, 1896

FOURSCORE years and seven  
 Light and dew from heaven  
 Have fallen with dawn on these glad woods each  
 day  
 Since here was born, even here,  
 A birth more bright and dear  
 Than ever a younger year  
 Hath seen or shall till all these pass away,  
 Even all the imperious pride of these,  
 The woodland ways majestic now with towers of  
 trees.

Love itself hath nought  
 Touched of tenderest thought  
 With holiest hallowing of memorial grace  
 For memory, blind with bliss,  
 To love, to clasp, to kiss,  
 So sweetly strange as this,  
 The sense that here the sun first hailed her face,  
 A babe at Her glad mother's breast,  
 And here again beholds it more beloved and blest.

Love's own heart, a living  
 Spring of strong thanksgiving,  
 Can bid no strength of welling song find way  
 When all the soul would seek  
 One word for joy to speak,  
 And even its strength makes weak  
 The too strong yearning of the soul to say  
 What may not be conceived or said  
 While darkness makes division of the quick and dead.

Haply, where the sun  
 Wanes, and death is none,  
 The word known here of silence only, held  
 Too dear for speech to wrong,  
 May leap in living song  
 Forth, and the speech be strong  
 As here the silence whence it yearned and welled  
 From hearts whose utterance love sealed fast  
 Till death perchance might give it grace to live at  
 last.

Here we have our earth  
 Yet, with all the mirth  
 Of all the summers since the world began,  
 All strengths of rest and strife  
 And love-lit love of life  
 Where death has birth to wife,  
 And where the sun speaks, and is heard of man :  
 Yea, half the sun's bright speech is heard,  
 And like the sea the soul of man gives back his word.

Earth's enkindled heart  
 Bears benignant part  
 In the ardent heaven's auroral pride of prime :

If ever home on earth  
 Were found of heaven's grace worth  
 So God-beloved a birth  
 As here makes bright the fostering face of time,  
 Here, heaven bears witness, might such grace  
 Fall fragrant as the dewfall on that brightening face.

Here, for mine and me,  
 All that eyes may see  
 Hath more than all the wide world else of good,  
 All nature else of fair :  
 Here as none otherwhere  
 Heaven is the circling air,  
 Heaven is the homestead, heaven the wold, the  
 wood :  
 The fragrance with the shadow spread  
 From broadening wings of cedars breathes of dawn's  
 bright bed.

Once a dawn rose here  
 More divine and dear,  
 Rose on a birth-bed brighter far than dawn's,  
 Whence all the summer grew  
 Sweet as when earth was new  
 And pure as Eden's dew :  
 And yet its light lives on these lustrous lawns,  
 Clings round these wildwood ways, and cleaves  
 To the aisles of shadow and sun that wind unweaves  
 and weaves.

Thoughts that smile and weep,  
 Dreams that hallow sleep,  
 Brood in the branching shadows of the trees,

Tall trees at agelong rest  
 Wherein the centuries nest,  
 Whence, blest as these are blest,  
 We part, and part not from delight in these ;  
 Whose comfort, sleeping as awake,  
 We bear about within us as when first it spake.

Comtort as of song  
 Grown with time more strong,  
 Made perfect and prophetic as the sea,  
 Whose message, when it lies  
 Far off our hungering eyes,  
 Within us prophesies  
 Of life not ours, yet ours as theirs may be  
 Whose souls far off us shine and sing  
 As ere they sprang back sunward, swift as fire might  
 spring.

All this oldworld pleasance  
 Hails a hallowing presence,  
 And thrills with sense of more than summer near,  
 And lifts toward heaven more high  
 The song-surpassing cry  
 Of rapture that July  
 Lives, for her love who makes it loveliest here ;  
 For joy that she who here first drew  
 The breath of life she gave me breathes it here  
 anew.

Never birthday born  
 Highest in height of morn  
 Whereout the star looks forth that leads the sun

## THE HIGH OAKS

Shone higher in love's account,  
Still seeing the mid noon mount  
From the eager dayspring's fount  
Each year more lustrous, each like all in one ;  
Whose light around us and above  
We could not see so lovely save by grace of love.

## BARKING HALL: A YEAR AFTER

STILL the sovereign trees  
 Make the sundawn's breeze  
 More bright, more sweet, more heavenly than it  
     rose,  
 As wind and sun fulfil  
 Their living rapture : still  
 Noon, dawn, and evening thrill  
 With radiant change the immeasurable repose  
 Wherewith the woodland wilds lie blest  
 And feel how storms and centuries rock them still to  
     rest.

Still the love-lit place  
 Given of God such grace  
 That here was born on earth a birth divine  
     Gives thanks with all its flowers  
     Through all their lustrous hours,  
     From all its birds and bowers  
 Gives thanks that here they felt her sunset shine  
     Where once her sunrise laughed, and bade  
 The life of all the living things it lit be glad.

Soft as light and strong  
     Rises yet their song  
 And thrills with pride the cedar-crested lawn

1170 BARKING HALL: A YEAR AFTER

And every brooding dove.  
But she, beloved above  
All utterance known of love,  
Abides no more the change of night and dawn,  
Beholds no more with earth-born eye  
These woods that watched her waking here where all  
things die.

Not the light that shone  
When she looked thereon  
Shines on them or shall shine for ever here.  
We know not, save when sleep  
Slays death, who fain would keep  
His mystery dense and deep,  
Where shines the smile we held and hold so dear.  
Dreams only, thrilled and filled with love,  
Bring back its light ere dawn leave nought alive  
above.

Nought alive awake  
Sees the strong dawn break  
On all the dreams that dying night bade live.  
Yet scarce the intolerant sense  
Of day's harsh evidence  
How came their word and whence  
Strikes dumb the song of thanks it bids them give,  
The joy that answers as it heard  
And lightens as it saw the light that spake the word.

Night and sleep and dawn  
Pass with dreams withdrawn :  
But higher above them far than noon may climb

BARKING HALL; A YEAR AFTER 1171

Love lives and turns to light  
The deadly noon of night.  
His fiery spirit of sight  
Endures no curb of change or darkling time.  
Even earth and transient things of earth  
Even here to him bear witness not of death but birth.

## MUSIC: AN ODE

## I

Was it light that spake from the darkness, or music  
 that shone from the word,  
 When the night was enkindled with sound of the  
 sun or the first-born bird ?  
 Souls enthralled and entrammelled in bondage of  
 seasons that fall and rise,  
 Bound fast round with the fetters of flesh, and blinded  
 with light that dies,  
 Lived not surely till music spake, and the spirit of  
 life was heard.

## II

Music, sister of sunrise, and herald of life to be,  
 Smiled as dawn on the spirit of man, and the thrall  
 was free.  
 Slave of nature and serf of time, the bondman of life  
 and death,  
 Dumb with passionless patience that breathed but  
 forlorn and reluctant breath,  
 Heard, beheld, and his soul made answer, and com-  
 muned aloud with the sea.

## III

Morning spake, and he heard : and the passionate  
silent noon  
Kept for him not silence : and soft from the mount-  
ing moon  
Fell the sound of her splendour, heard as dawn's in  
the breathless night,  
Not of men but of birds whose note bade man's soul  
quicken and leap to light :  
And the song of it spake, and the light and the dark-  
ness of earth were as chords in tune.

THE CENTENARY OF THE BATTLE  
OF THE NILE

AUGUST 1898

*'Horatio Nelson — Honor est a Nilo'*

A HUNDRED years have lightened and have waned  
Since ancient Nile by grace of Nelson gained  
A glory higher in story now than time  
Saw when his kings were gods that raged and reigned.

The day that left even England more sublime  
And higher on heights that none but she may climb  
Abides above all shock of change-born chance  
Where hope and memory hear the stars keep chime.

The strong and sunbright lie whose name was France  
Arose against the sun of truth, whose glance  
Laughed large from the eyes of England, fierce as  
fire  
Whence eyes wax blind that gaze on truth askance.

A name above all names of heroes, higher  
Than song may sound or heart of man aspire,  
Kings as the very voice that speaks the sea  
To-day from all the sea's enkindling lyre.

The sound that bids the soul of silence be  
Fire, and a rapturous music, speaks, and we  
    Hear what the sea's heart utters, wide and far :  
" This was his day, and this day's light was he."

O sea, our sea that hadst him for thy star,  
A hundred years that fall upon thee are  
    Even as a hundred flakes of rain or snow :  
No storm of battle signs thee with a scar.

But never more may ship that sails thee show,  
But never may the sun that loves thee know,  
    But never may thine England give thee more,  
A man whose life and death shall praise thee so.

The Nile, the sea, the battle, and the shore,  
Heard as we hear one word arise and soar,  
    Beheld one name above them tower and glow—  
Nelson : a light that time bows down before.

## TRAFAVGAR DAY

SEA, that art ours as we are thine, whose name  
Is one with England's even as light with flame,  
Dost thou as we, thy chosen of all men, know  
This day of days when death gave life to fame ?

Dost thou not kindle above and thrill below  
With rapturous record, with memorial glow,  
Remembering this thy festal day of fight,  
And all the joy it gave, and all the woe ?

Never since day broke flowerlike forth of night  
Broke such a dawn of battle. Death in sight  
Made of the man whose life was like the sun  
A man more godlike than the lord of light.

There is none like him, and there shall be none.  
When England bears again as great a son,  
He can but follow fame where Nelson led.  
There is not and there cannot be but one.

As earth has but one England, crown and head  
Of all her glories till the sun be dead,  
Supreme in peace and war, supreme in song,  
Supreme in freedom, since her rede was read,

Since first the soul that gave her speech grew strong  
To help the right and heal the wild world's wrong,

So she hath but one royal Nelson, born  
To reign on time above the years that throng.

The music of his name puts fear to scorn,  
And thrills our twilight through with sense of morn :  
As England was, how should not England be ?  
No tempest yet has left her banner torn.

No year has yet put out the day when he  
Who lived and died to keep our kingship free  
Wherever seas by warring winds are worn  
Died, and was one with England and the sea.

*October 21, 1895.*

CROMWELL'S STATUE<sup>1</sup>

WHAT needs our Cromwell stone or bronze to say  
His was the light that lit on England's way

The sundawn of her time-compelling power,  
The noontide of her most imperial day ?

His hand won back the sea for England's dower ;  
His footfall bade the Moor change heart and cower ;

His word on Milton's tongue spake law to France  
When Piedmont felt the she-wolf Rome devour.

From Cromwell's eyes the light of England's glance  
Flashed, and bowed down the kings by grace of  
chance,

The priest-anointed princes ; one alone  
By grace of England held their hosts in trance.

The enthroned Republic from her kinglier throne  
Spake, and her speech was Cromwell's. Earth has  
known

No lordlier presence. How should Cromwell stand  
With kinglets and with queenlings hewn in stone ?

<sup>1</sup> Refused by the party of reaction and disunion in the House of Commons on the 17th of June, 1895.

Incarnate England in his warrior hand  
Smote, and as fire devours the blackening brand  
    Made ashes of their strengths who wrought her  
    wrong,  
And turned the strongholds of her foes to sand.

His praise is in the sea's and Milton's song ;  
What praise could reach him from the weakling  
    throng  
    That rules by leave of tongues whose praise is  
    shame—  
Him, who made England out of weakness strong ?

There needs no clarion's blast of broad-blown fame  
To bid the world bear witness whence he came  
    Who bade fierce Europe fawn at England's heel  
And purged the plague of lineal rule with flame.

There needs no witness graven on stone or steel  
For one whose work bids fame bow down and kneel ;  
    Our man of men, whose time-commanding name  
Speaks England, and proclaims her Commonweal.

*June 20, 1895*

## A WORD FOR THE NAVY

## I

QUEEN born of the sea, that hast borne her  
 The mightiest of seamer~~s~~ on earth,  
 Bright England, whose glories adorn her  
 And bid her rejoice in thy birth  
 As others made mothers  
 Rejoice in births sublime,  
 She names thee, she claims thee,  
 The lordliest child of time.

## II

All hers is the praise of thy story,  
 All thine is the love of her choice  
 The light of her waves is thy glory,  
 The sound of thy soul is her voice  
 They fear it who hear it  
 And love not truth nor thee :  
 They sicken, heart-stricken,  
 Who see and would not see.

## III

The lords of thy fate, and thy keepers  
 Whose charge is the strength of thy ships,  
 If now they be dreamers and sleepers,  
 Or sluggards with lies at their lips,

Thy haters and traitors,  
 False friends or foes described,  
 Might scatter and shatter  
 Too soon thy princely pride.

## IV

Dark Muscovy, reptile in rancour,  
 Base Germany, blatant in guile,  
 Lay wait for thee riding at anchor  
 On waters that whisper and smile.  
 They deem thee or dream thee  
 Less living now than dead,  
 Deep sunken and drunken  
 With sleep whence fear has fled.

## V

And what though thy song as thine action  
 Wax faint, and thy place be not known,  
 While faction is grappling with faction,  
 Twin curs with thy corpse for a bone?  
 They care not, who spare not  
 The noise of pens or throats;  
 Who bluster and muster  
 Blind ranks and bellowing votes.

## VI

Let populace jangle with peerage  
 And ministers shuffle their mobs;  
 Mad pilots who reck not of steerage  
 Though tempest ahead of them throbs.  
 That throbbing and sobbing  
 Of wind and gradual wave  
 They hear not and fear not  
 Who guide thee toward thy grave.

## VII

No clamour of cries or of parties  
Is worth but a whisper from thee,  
While only the trust of thy heart is  
At one with the soul of the sea.  
In justice her trust is  
Whose time her tidestreams keep :  
They sink not, they shrink not,  
Time casts them not on sleep.

## VIII

Sleep thou : for thy past was so royal,  
Love hardly would bid thee take heed  
Were Russia not faithful and loyal  
Nor Germany guiltless of greed.  
No nation, in station  
Of story less than thou,  
Re-risen from prison,  
Can stand against thee now.

## IX

Sleep on : is the time not a season  
For strong men to slumber and sleep,  
And wise men to palter with treason ?  
And that they sow tares, shall they reap ?  
The wages of ages  
Wherein men smiled and slept,  
Fame fails them, shame veils them,  
Their record is not kept.

## X

Nay, whence is it then that we know it,  
 What wages were theirs, and what fame ?  
 Deep voices of prophet and poet  
 Bear record against them of shame.  
 Death, starker and darker  
 Than seals the graveyard grate,  
 Entombs them and dooms them  
 To darkness deep as fate.

## XI

But thou, though the world should misdoubt thee,  
 Be strong as the seas at thy side ;  
 Bind on but thine armour about thee,  
 That girds thee with power and with pride.  
 Where Drake stood, where Blake stood,  
 Where fame sees Nelson stand,  
 Stand thou too, and now too  
 Take thou thy fate in hand.

## XII

At the gate of the sea, in the gateway,  
 They stood as the guards of thy gate ;  
 Take now but thy strengths to thee straightway,  
 Though late, we will deem it not late.  
 Thy story, thy glory,  
 The very soul of thee,  
 It rose not, it grows not.  
 It comes not save by sea.

## NORTHUMBERLAND

BETWEEN our eastward and our westward sea  
 The narrowing strand  
 Clasps close the noblest shore fame holds in fee  
 Even here where English birth seals all men free—  
 Northumberland.

The sea-mists meet across it when the snow  
 Clothes moor and fell,  
 And bid their true-born hearts who love it glow  
 For joy that none less nobly born may know  
 What love knows well.

The splendour and the strength of storm and fight  
 Sustain the song  
 That filled our fathers' hearts with joy to smite,  
 To live, to love, to lay down life that right  
 Might tread down wrong.

They warred, they sang, they triumphed, and they  
 passed,  
 And left us glad  
 Here to be born, their sons, whose hearts hold fast  
 The proud old love no change can overcast,  
 No chance leave sad.

None save our northmen ever, none but we,  
 Met, pledged, or fought  
 Such foes and friends as Scotland and the sea  
 With heart so high and equal, strong in glee  
 And stern in thought.

Thought, fed from time's memorial springs with pride,  
 Made strong as fire  
 Their hearts who hurled the foe down Flodden side,  
 And hers who rode the waves none else durst ride—  
 None save her sire.

O land beloved, where nought of legend's dream  
 Outshines the truth,  
 Where Joyous Gard, closed round with clouds that  
 gleam  
 For them that know thee not, can scarce but seem  
 Too sweet for sooth,

Thy sons forget not, nor shall fame forget,  
 The deed there done  
 Before the walls whose fabled fame is yet  
 A light too sweet and strong to rise and set  
 With moon and sun.

Song bright as flash of swords or oars that shine  
 Through fight or foam  
 Stirs yet the blood thou hast given thy sons like  
 wine  
 To hail in each bright ballad hailed as thine  
 One heart, one home.

Our Collingwood, though Nelson be not ours,  
By him shall stand  
Immortal, till those waifs of oldworld hours,  
Forgotten, leave uncrowned with bays and flowers  
Northumberland.

## STRATFORD-ON-AVON

JUNE 27, 1901

BE glad in heaven above all souls insphered,  
Most royal and most loyal born of men,  
Shakespeare, of all on earth beloved or feared  
Or worshipped, highest in sight of human ken.  
The homestead hallowed by thy sovereign birth,  
Whose name, being one with thine, stands higher  
than Rome,  
Forgets not how of all on English earth  
Their trust is holiest, there who have their home.  
Stratford is thine and England's. None that hate  
The commonweal whose empire sets men free  
Find comfort there, where once by grace of fate  
A soul was born as boundless as the sea.  
If life, if love, if memory now be thine,  
Rejoice that still thy Stratford bears thy sign.

## BURNS: AN ODE

A FIRE of fierce and laughing light  
That clove the shuddering heart of night  
Leapt earthward, and the thunder's might  
    That pants and yearns  
Made fitful music round its flight :  
    And earth saw Burns.

The joyous lightning found its voice  
And bade the heart of wrath rejoice  
And scorn uplift a song to voice  
    The imperial hate  
That smote the God of base men's choice  
At God's own gate.

Before the shrine of dawn, wherethrough  
The lark rang rapture as she flew,  
It flashed and fired the darkling dew :  
    And all that heard  
With love or loathing hailed anew  
A new day's word.

The servants of the lord of hell,  
As though their lord had blessed them, fell  
Foaming at mouth for fear, so well  
    They knew the lie  
Wherewith they sought to scan and spell  
    The unsounded sky.

And Calvin, night's prophetic bird,  
Out of his home in hell was heard  
Shrieking ; and all the fens were stirred  
    Whence plague is bred ;  
Can God endure the scoffer's word ?  
    But God was dead.

The God they made them in despite  
Of man and woman, love and light,  
Strong sundawn and the starry night,  
    The lie supreme,  
Shot through with song, stood forth to sight  
    A devil's dream.

And he that bent the lyric bow  
And laid the lord of darkness low  
And bade the fire of laughter glow  
    Across his grave,  
And bade the tides above it flow,  
    Wave hurtling wave,

Shall he not win from latter days  
More than his own could yield of praise ?  
Ay, could the sovereign singer's bays  
    Forsake his brow,  
The warrior's, won on stormier ways,  
    Still clasp it now.

He loved, and sang of love : he laughed,  
And bade the cup whereout he quaffed  
Shine as a planet, fore and aft,  
    And left and right,  
And keen as shoots the sun's first shaft  
    Against the night.

But love and wine were moon and sun  
For many a fame long since undone,  
And sorrow and joy have lost and won  
    By stormy turns  
As many a singer's soul, if none  
    More bright than Burns.

And sweeter far in grief or mirth  
Have songs as glad and sad of birth  
Found voice to speak of wealth or dearth  
    In joy of life :  
But never song took fire from earth  
    More strong for strife.

The daisy by his ploughshare cleft,  
The lips of women loved and left,  
The griefs and joys that weave the weft  
    Of human time,  
With craftsman's cunning, keen and deft,  
    He carved in rhyme.

But Chaucer's daisy shines a star  
Above his ploughshare's reach to mar,  
And mightier vision gave Dunbar  
    More strenuous wing  
To hear around all sins that are  
    Hell dance and sing.

And when such pride and power of trust  
In song's high gift to arouse from dust  
Death, and transfigure love or lust  
    Through smiles or tears  
In golden speech that takes no rust  
    From cankering years,

As never spake but once in one  
Strong star-crossed child of earth and sun,  
Villon, made music such as none  
    May praise or blame,  
A crown of starrier flower was won  
    Than Burns may claim.

But never, since bright earth was born  
In rapture of the enkindling morn,  
Might godlike wrath and sunlike scorn  
    That was and is  
And shall be while false weeds are worn  
    Find word like his.

Above the rude and radiant earth  
That heaves and glows from firth to firth  
In vale and mountain, bright in dearth  
    And warm in wealth,  
Which gave his fiery glory birth  
    By chance and stealth,

Above the storms of praise and blame  
That blur with mist his lustrous name,  
His thunderous laughter went and came,  
    And lives and flies ;  
The roar that follows on the flame  
    When lightning dies.

Earth, and the snow-dimmed heights of air,  
And water winding soft and fair  
Through still sweet places, bright and bare,  
    By bent and byre,  
Taught him what hearts within them were :  
    But his was fire

## THE COMMONWEAL

## A SONG FOR UNIONISTS

MEN, whose fathers braved the world in arms against  
our isles in union,

Men, whose brothers met rebellion face to face,  
Show the hearts ye have, if worthy long descent and  
high communion,

Show the spirits, if unbroken, of your race.

What are these that howl and hiss across the strait  
of westward water?

What is he who floods our ears with speech in  
flood?

See the long tongue lick the dripping hand that  
smokes and reeks of slaughter!

See the man of words embrace the man of blood!

Hear the plea whereby the tonguester mocks and  
charms the gazing gaper—

“ We are they whose works are works of love and  
peace ;

Till disunion bring forth union, what is union, sirs,  
but paper?

Break and rend it, then shall trust and strength  
increase.”

Who would fear to trust a double-faced but single  
hearted dreamer,  
Pure of purpose, clean of hand, and clear of guile?  
"Life is well-nigh spent," he sighs; "you call me  
shuffler, trickster, 'schemer?  
I am old—when young men yell at me, I smile."

Many a year that priceless light of life has trembled,  
we remember,  
On the platform of extinction—unextinct;  
Many a month has been for him the long year's last—  
life's calm December:  
Can it be that he who said so, saying so, winked?

No; the lust of life, the thirst for work and days with  
work to do in,  
Drove and drives him down the road of splendid  
shame;  
All is well, if o'er the monument recording England's  
ruin  
Time shall read, inscribed in triumph, Gladstone's  
name.

Thieves and murderers, hands yet red with blood and  
tongues yet black with lies,  
Clap and clamour—"Parnell spurs his Gladstone  
well!"  
Truth, unscared and undeluded by their praise or  
blame, replies—  
"Is the goal of fraud and bloodshed heaven or  
hell?"

Old men eloquent, who truckle to the traitors of the  
time,  
Love not office—power is no desire of theirs:

What if yesterday their hearts recoiled from blood  
and fraud and crime?

Conscience erred--an error which to-day repairs.

Conscience only now convinces them of strange  
though transient error:

Only now they see how fair is treason's face;  
See how true the falsehood, just the theft, and  
blameless is the terror,  
Which replaces just and blameless men in place.

Place and time decide the right and wrong of thought  
and word and action;

Crime is black as hell, till virtue gain its vote;  
Then—but ah, to think or say so smacks of fraud or  
smells of faction!—

Mercy holds the door while Murder hacks the throat.

Murder? Treason? Theft? Poor brothers who  
succumb to such temptations,

Shall we lay on you or take on us the blame?

Reason answers, and religion echoes round to  
wondering nations,

“Not with Ireland, but with England rests the  
shame.”

Reason speaks through mild religion's organ, loud  
and long and lusty—

Profit speaks through lips of patriots pure and  
true—

“English friends, whose trust we ask for, has not  
England found us trusty?

Not for us we seek advancement, but for you.

“ Far and near the world bears witness of our wisdom, courage, honour ;  
Egypt knows if there our fame burns bright or dim.  
Let but England trust as Gordon trusted, soon shall come upon her  
Such deliverance as our daring brought on him.

“ Far and wide the world rings record of our faith,  
our constant dealing,  
Love of country, truth to friends, contempt for foes.  
Sign once more the bond of trust in us that here awaits but sealing,  
We will give yet more than all our record shows.

“ Perfect ruin, shame eternal, everlasting degradation,  
Freedom bought and sold, truth bound and treason free.”  
Yet an hour is here for answer ; now, if here be yet a nation,  
Answer, England, man by man from sea to sea !

*June 30. 1886.*

## THE QUESTION

1887

SHALL England consummate the crime  
 That binds the murderer's hand, and leaves  
 No surety for the trust of thieves?  
 Time pleads against it—truth and time—  
 And pity frowns and grieves.

The hoary henchman of the gang  
 Lifts hands that never dew nor rain  
 May cleanse from Gordon's blood again,  
 Appealing: pity's tenderest pang  
 Thrills his pure heart with pain.

Grand helmsman of the clamorous crew,  
 The good grey recreant quakes and weeps  
 To think that crime no longer creeps  
 Safe toward its end: that murderers too  
 May die when mercy sleeps.

While all the lives were innocent  
 That slaughter drank, and laughed with rage,  
 Bland virtue sighed, "A former age . . . .  
 Taught murder: souls long discontent  
 Can aught save blood assuage?

“ You blame not Russian hands that smite  
 By fierce and secret ways the power  
 That leaves not life one chainless hour ;  
 Have these than they less natural right  
 To claim life’s natural dower ?

“ The dower that freedom brings the slave  
 She weds, is vengeance : why should we,  
 Whom equal laws acclaim as free,  
 Think shame, if men too blindly brave  
 Steal, murder, skulk, and flee ?

“ At kings they strike in Russia : there  
 Men take their life in hand who slay  
 Kings : these, that have not heart to lay  
 Hand save on girls whose ravaged hair  
 Is made the patriot’s prey,

“ These, whom the sight of old men slain  
 Makes bold to bid their children die,  
 Starved, if they hold not peace, nor lie,  
 Claim loftier praise : could others deign  
 To stand in shame so high ?

“ Could others deign to dare such deeds  
 As holiest Ireland hallows ? Nay,  
 But justice then makes plain our way :  
 Be laws burnt up like burning weeds  
 That vex the face of day.

“ Shall bloodmongers be held of us  
 Blood-guilty ? Hands reached out for gold  
 . Whereon blood rusts not yet, we hold  
 Bloodless and blameless : ever thus  
 Have good men held of old.

“ Fair Freedom, fledged and imped with lies,  
 Takes flight by night where murder lurks,  
 And broods on murderous ways and works,  
 Yet seems not hideous in our eyes  
 As Austrians or as Turks.

“ Be it ours to undo a woful past,  
 To bid the bells of concord chime,  
 To break the bonds of suffering crime,  
 Slack now, that some would make more fast :  
 Such teaching comes of time.”

So pleads the gentlest heart that lives,  
 Whose pity, pitiless for all  
 Whom darkling terror holds in thrall,  
 Toward none save miscreants yearns, and gives  
 Alms of warm tears—and gall.

Hear, England, and obey : for he  
 Who claims thy trust again to-day  
 Is he who left thy sons a prey  
 To shame whence only death sets free :  
 Hear, England, and obey.

Thy spoils he gave to deck the Dutch ;  
 Thy noblest pride, most pure, most brave,  
 To death forlorn and sure he gave ;  
 Nor now requires he overmuch  
 Who bids thee dig thy grave.

Dig deep the grave of shame, wherein  
 Thy fame, thy commonweal, must lie ;  
 Put thought of aught save terror by ;  
 To strike and slay the slayer is sin ;  
 And Murder must not die.

Bind fast the true man ; loose the thief ;  
Shamed were the land, the laws accursed,  
Were guilt, not innocence, amerced ;  
And dark the wrong and sore the grief,  
Were tyrants too coerced.

The fiercest cowards that ever skulked,  
The cowardliest hounds that ever lapped  
Blood, if their horde be tracked and trapped,  
And justice claim their lives for mulct,  
Gnash teeth that flashed and snapped.

Bow down for fear, then, England : bow,  
Lest worse befall thee yet ; and swear  
That nought save pity, conscience, care  
For truth and mercy, moves thee now  
To call foul falsehood fair.

So shalt thou live in shame, and hear  
The lips of all men laugh thee dead ;  
The wide world's mockery round thy head  
Shriek like a storm-wind : and a bier  
Shall be thine honour's bed.

## APOSTASY

*Et Judas m'a dit : Traître !—VICTOR HUGO*

## I

TRUTHS change with time, and terms with truth.  
To-day

A statesman worships union, and to-night  
Disunion. Shame to have sinned against the  
light

Confounds not but impels his tongue to unsay  
What yestereve he swore. Should fear make way  
For treason ? honour change her livery ? fright  
Clasp hands with interest ? wrong pledge faith  
with right ?

Religion, mercy, conscience, answer—Yea.

To veer is not to veer : when votes are weighed,  
The numerous tongue approves him renegade  
Who cannot change his banner : he that can  
Sits crowned with wreaths of praise too pure to fade.  
Truth smiles applause on treason's poisonous  
plan :  
And Cleon is an honourable man.

## II

Pure faith, fond hope, sweet love, with God for guide,  
Move now the men whose blameless error cast  
In prison (ah, but love condones the past !)  
Their subject knaves that were—their lords that ride

Now laughing on their necks, and now bestride  
 Their vassal backs in triumph. Faith stands fast  
 Though fear haul down the flag that crowned her  
 mast

And hope and love proclaim that truth has lied.

Turn, turn, and turn—so bids the still small voice,  
 The changeless voice of honour. He that stands  
 Where all his life he stood, with bribeless hands,  
 With tongue unhired to mourn, reprove, rejoice,  
 Curse, bless, forswear, and swear again, and lie,  
 Stands proven apostate in the apostate's eye

## III

Fraud shrinks from faith : at sight of swans, the raven  
 Chides blackness, and the snake recoils aghast  
 In fear of poison when a bird flies past.

Thersites brands Achilles as a craven ;  
 The shoal fed full with shipwreck blames the haven  
 For murderous lust of lives devoured, and vast  
 Desire of doom whose feast is mercy's fast :

And Bacon sees the traitor's mark engraven  
 Full on the front of Essex. Grief and shame  
 Obscure the chaste and sunlike spirit of Oates  
 At thought of Russell's treason ; and the name  
 Of Milton sickens with superb disgust  
 The heaving heart of Waller. Wisdom dotes,  
 If wisdom turns not tail and licks not dust.

## IV

The sole sweet land found fit to wed the sea,  
 With reptile rebels at her heel of old,  
 Set hard her heel upon them, and controlled  
 The cowering poisonous peril. How should she

Cower, and resign her trust of empire? Free  
As winds and waters live the loyal-souled  
And true-born sons that love her: nay, the bold  
Base knaves who curse her name have leave to be  
The loud-tongued liars they are. For she, beyond  
All woful years that bid men's hearts despond,  
Sees yet the likeness of her ancient fame  
Burn from the heavenward heights of history, hears  
Not Leicester's name but Sidney's—faith's, not  
fear's—  
Not Gladstone's now but only Gordon's name.

## RUSSIA : AN ODE

1890

## I

OUT of hell a word comes hissing, dark as doom,  
 Fierce as fire, and foul as plague-polluted gloom ;  
 Out of hell wherein the sinless damned endure  
 More than ever sin conceived of pains impure ;  
 More than ever ground men's living souls to dust ;  
 Worse than madness ever dreamed of murderous lust.  
 Since the world's wail first went up from lands and  
 seas

Ears have heard not, tongues have told not things  
 like these.

Dante, led by love's and hate's accordant spell  
 Down the deepest and the loathliest ways of hell,  
 Where beyond the brook of blood the rain was fire,  
 Where the scalps were masked with dung more deep  
 than mire,

Saw not, where the filth was foulest, and the night  
 Darkest, depths whose fiends could match the  
 Muscovite.

Set beside this truth, his deadliest vision seems  
 Pale and pure and painless as a virgin's dreams.

Maidens dead beneath the clasping lash, and wives  
Rent with deadlier pangs than death—for shame  
survives,  
Naked, mad, starved, scourged, spurned, frozen,  
fallen, deflowered,  
Souls and bodies as by fangs of beasts devoured,  
Sounds that hell would hear not, sights no thought  
could shape,  
Limbs that feel as flame the ravenous grasp of rape,  
Filth of raging crime and shame that crime enjoys,  
Age made one with youth in torture, girls with boys,  
These, and worse if aught be worse than these things  
are,  
Prove thee regent, Russia—praise thy mercy, Czar.

## II

Sons of man, men born of women, may we dare  
Say they sin who dare be slain and dare not spare ?  
They who take their lives in hand and smile on death,  
Holding life as less than sleep's most fitful breath,  
So their life perchance or death may serve and speed  
Faith and hope, that die if dream become not deed ?  
Nought is death and nought is life and nought is fate  
Save for souls that love has clothed with fire of hate.  
These behold them, weigh them, prove them, find  
them nought,  
Save by light of hope and fire of burning thought.  
What though sun be less than storm where these  
aspire,  
Dawn than lightning, song than thunder, light than  
fire ?  
Help is none in heaven : hope sees no gentler star :  
Earth is hell, and hell bows down before the Czar.

All its monstrous, murderous, lecherous births acclaim  
 Him whose empire lives to match its fiery fame.  
 Nay, perchance at sight or sense of deeds here done,  
 Here where men may lift up eyes to greet the sun,  
 Hell recoils heart-stricken : horror worse than hell  
 Darkens earth and sickens heaven ; life knows the  
 spell,  
 Shudders, quails, and sinks--or, filled with fierier  
 breath,  
 Rises red in arms devised of darkling death.  
 Pity mad with passion, anguish mad with shame,  
 Call aloud on justice by her darker name ;  
 Love grows hate for love's sake • life takes death for  
 guide.  
 Night hath none but one red star Tyrannicide.

## III

“ God or man, be swift ; hope sickens with delay :  
 Smite, and send him howling down his father's  
 way !  
 Fall, O fire of heaven, and smite as fire from hell  
 Hails wherein men's torturers, crowned and cowering,  
 dwell !  
 These that crouch and shrink and shudder, girt with  
 power—  
 These that reign, and dare not trust one trembling  
 hour—  
 These omnipotent, whom terror curbs and drives—  
 These whose life reflects in fear their victims' lives—  
 These whose breath sheds poison worse than plague's  
 thick breath—  
 These whose reign is ruin, these whose word is death,

These whose will turns heaven to hell, and day to night,

These, if God's hand smite not, how shall man's not smite ? "

So from hearts by horror withered as by fire

Surge the strains of unappeasable desire ;

Sounds that bid the darkness lighten, lit for death ;

Bid the lips whose breath was doom yield up their breath :

Down the way of Czars, awhile in vain deferred,  
Bid the Second Alexander light the Third.

How for shame shall men rebuke them ? how may we Blame, whose fathers died, and slew, to leave us free ?

We, though all the world cry out upon them, know, Were our strife as theirs, we could not strike but so ;

Could not cower, and could not kiss the hands that smite ;

Could not meet them armed in sunlit battle's light.

Dark as fear and red as hate though morning rise,

Life it is that conquers ; death it is that dies.

## FOR GREECE AND CRETE

STORM and shame and fraud and darkness fill the  
nations full with night :  
Hope and fear whose eyes yearn eastward have but  
fire and sword in sight :  
One alone, whose name is one with glory, sees and  
seeks the light.

Hellas, mother of the spirit, sole supreme in war and  
peace,  
Land of light, whose word remembered bids all fear  
and sorrow cease,  
Lives again, while freedom lightens eastward yet for  
sons of Greece.

Greece, where only men whose manhood was as god  
head ever trod,  
Bears the blind world witness yet of light wherewith  
her feet are shod :  
Freedom, armed of Greece was always very man and  
very God.

Now the winds of old that filled her sails with triumph,  
when the fleet  
Bound for death from Asia fled before them stricken,  
wake to greet  
Ships full-winged again for freedom toward the sacred  
shores of Crete.

There was God born man, the song that spake of  
old time said : and there  
Man, made even as God by trust that shows him  
nought too dire to dare,  
Now may light again the beacon lit when those we  
worship were.

Sharp the concert wrought of discord shrills the tune  
of shame and death,  
Turk by Christian fenced and fostered, Mecca backed  
by Nazareth :  
All the powerless powers, tongue-valiant, breathe but  
greed's or terror's breath.

Though the tide that feels the west wind lift it wave  
by widening wave  
Wax not yet to height and fullness of the storm that  
smites to save,  
None shall bid the flood back seaward till no bar be  
left to brave.

## DELPHIC HYMN TO APOLLO

(B.C. 280)

DONE INTO ENGLISH

## I

THEE, the son of God most high,  
 Famed for harping song, will I  
 Proclaim, and the deathless oracular word  
 From the snow-topped rock that we gaze on heard,  
 Counsels of thy glorious giving  
 Manifest for all men living,  
 How thou madest the tripod of prophecy thine  
 Which the wrath of the dragon kept guard on, a shrine  
 Voiceless till thy shafts could smite  
 All his live coiled glittering might.

## II

Ye that hold of right alone  
 All deep woods on Helicon,  
 Fair daughters of thunder-girt God, with your bright  
 White arms uplift as to lighten the light,  
 Come to chant your brother's praise,  
 Gold-haired Phœbus, loud in lays,  
 Even his, who afar up the twin-topped seat  
 Of the rock Parnassian whereon we meet

Risen with glorious Delphic maids  
Seeks the soft spring-sweetened shades  
Castalian, fain of the Delphian peak  
Prophetic, sublime as the feet that seek.  
Glorious Athens, highest of state,  
Come, with praise and prayer elate,  
O thou that art queen of the plain unscarred  
That the warrior Tritonid hath alway in guard,  
Where on many a sacred shrine  
Young bulls' thigh-bones burn and shine  
As the god that is fire overtakes them, and fast  
The smoke of Arabia to heavenward is cast,  
Scattering wide its balm : and shrill  
Now with nimble notes that thrill  
The flute strikes up for the song, and the harp of gold  
Strikes up to the song sweet answer : and all behold,  
All, aswarm as bees, give ear,  
Who by birth hold Athens dear.

## A NEW CENTURY

AN age too great for thought of ours to scan,  
A wave upon the sleepless sea of time  
That sinks and sleeps for ever, ere the chime  
Pass that salutes with blessing, not with ban,  
The dark year dead, the bright year born for man,  
Dies : all its days that watched man cower and climb,  
Frail as the foam, and as the sun sublime,  
Sleep sound as they that slept ere these began.

Our mother earth, whose ages none may tell,  
Puts on no change : time bids not her wax pale  
Or kindle, quenched or quickened, when the knell  
Sounds, and we cry across the veering gale  
Farewell—and midnight answers us, Farewell ;  
Hail—and the heaven of morning answers, Hail.

## AN EVENING AT VICHY

SEPTEMBER 1896

WRITTEN ON THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF LORD LEIGHTON

A LIGHT has passed that never shall pass away,  
A sun has set whose rays are unquelled of night.  
The loyal grace, the courtesy bright as day,  
The strong sweet radiant-spirit of life and light  
That shone and smiled and lightened on all men's  
sight,  
The kindly life whose tune was the tune of May,  
For us now dark, for love and for fame is bright.

Nay, not for us that live as the fen-fires live,  
As stars that shoot and shudder with life and die,  
Can death make dark that lustre of life, or give  
The grievous gift of trust in oblivion's lie.  
Days dear and far death touches, and draws them  
nigh,  
And bids the grief that broods on their graves forgive  
The day that seems to mock them as clouds that fly.

If life be life more faithful than shines on sleep  
When dreams take wing and lighten and fade like  
flame,  
Then haply death may be not a death so deep

That all things past are past for it wholly—fame,  
Love, loving-kindness, seasons that went and came,  
And left their light on life as a seal to keep  
Winged memory fast and heedful of time's dead  
claim.

Death gives back life and light to the sunless years  
Whose suns long sunken set not for ever. Time,  
Blind, fierce, and deaf as tempest, relents, and hears  
And sees how bright the days and how sweet their  
chime  
Rang, shone, and passed in music that matched  
the clime  
Wherein we met rejoicing—a joy that cheers  
Sorrow, to see the night as the dawn sublime.

The days that were outlighten the days that are,  
And eyes now darkened shine as the stars we see  
And hear not sing, impassionate star to star,  
As once we heard the music that haply he  
Hears, high in heaven if ever a voice may be  
The same in heaven, the same as on earth, afar  
From pain and earth as heaven from the heaving  
sea.

A woman's voice, divine as a bird's by dawn  
Kindled and stirred to sunward, arose and held  
Our souls that heard, from earth as from sleep with-  
drawn,  
And filled with light as stars, and as stars com-  
pelled  
To move by might of music, elate while quelled,  
Subdued by rapture, lit as a mountain lawn  
By morning whence all heaven in the sunrise welled.

And her the shadow of death as a robe clasped round  
Then and as morning's music she passed away.  
And he then with us, warrior and wanderer, crowned  
With fame that shone from eastern on western  
day,  
More strong, more kind, than praise or than grief  
might say,  
Has passed now forth of shadow by sunlight bound,  
Of night shot through with light that is frail as  
May.

May dies, and light grows darkness, and life grows  
death :  
Hope fades and shrinks and falls as a changing leaf :  
Remembrance, touched and kindled by love's live  
breath,  
Shines, and subdues the shadow of time called grief,  
The shade whose length of life is as life's date brief,  
With joy that broods on the sunlight past, and saith  
That thought and love hold sorrow and change in  
fief.

Sweet, glad, bright spirit, kind as the sun seems kind  
When earth and sea rejoice in his gentler spell,  
Thy face that was we see not ; bereft and blind,  
We see but yet, rejoicing to see, and dwell  
Awhile in days that heard not the death-day's  
knell,  
A light so bright that scarcely may sorrow find  
One old sweet word that hails thee and mourns—  
Farewell.

## TO GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS

ON THE EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH,  
FEBRUARY 23 1897

HIGH thought and hallowed love, by faith made one,  
Begat and bare the sweet strong-hearted child,  
Art, nursed of Nature ; earth and sea and sun  
Saw Nature then more godlike as she smiled.  
Life smiled on death, and death on life : the Soul  
Between them shone, and soared above their strife,  
And left on Time's unclosed and starry scroll  
A sign that quickened death to deathless life.  
Peace rose like Hope, a patient queen, and bade  
Hell's firstborn, Faith, abjure her creed and die ;  
And Love, by life and death made sad and glad,  
Gave Conscience ease, and watched Good Will  
pass by.  
All these make music now of one man's name,  
Whose life and age are one with love and fame.

## ON THE DEATH OF MRS. LYNN LINTON

KIND, wise, and true as truth's own heart,  
 A soul that here  
 Chose and held fast the better part  
 And cast out fear,

Has left us ere we dreamed of death  
 For life so strong,  
 Clear as the sundawn's light and breath,  
 And sweet as song.

We see no more what here awhile  
 Shed light on men :  
 Has Landor seen that brave bright smile  
 Alive again ?

If death and life and love be one  
 And hope no lie  
 And night no stronger than the sun,  
 These cannot die.

The father-spirit whence her soul  
 Took strength, and gave  
 Back love, is perfect yet and whole,  
 As hope might crave.

1218 ON THE DEATH OF MRS. LYNN LINTON

His word is living light and fire :  
And hers shall live  
By grace of all good gifts the sire  
Gave power to give.

The sire and daughter, twain and one  
In quest and goal,  
Stand face to face beyond the sun,  
And soul to soul.

Not we, who loved them well, may dream  
What joy sublime  
Is theirs, if dawn through darkness gleam,  
And life through time.

Time seems but here the mask of death,  
That falls and shows  
A void where hope may draw not breath :  
Night only knows.

Love knows not : all that love may keep  
Glad memory gives :  
The spirit of the days that sleep  
Still wakes and lives.

But not the spirit's self, though song  
Would lend it speech,  
May touch the goal that hope might long  
In vain to reach.

How dear that high true heart, how sweet  
Those keen kind eyes,  
Love knows, who knows how fiery fleet  
Is life that flies.

ON THE DEATH OF MRS. LYNN LINTON 1219

If life there be that flies not, fair  
The life must be  
That thrills her sovereign spirit there  
And sets it free.

## IN MEMORY OF AURELIO SAFFI

BELOVED above all nations, land adored,  
 Sovereign in spirit and charm, by song and sword,  
 Sovereign whose life is love, whose name is light,  
 Italia, queen that hast the sun for lord,

Bride that hast heaven for bridegroom, how should  
 night  
 Veil or withhold from faith's and memory's sight  
 A man beloved and crowned of thee and fame,  
 Hide for an hour his name's memorial might ?

Thy sons may never speak or hear the name  
 Saffi, and feel not love's regenerate flame  
 Thrill all the quickening heart with faith and pride  
 In one whose life makes death and life the same.

They die indeed whose souls before them died :  
 Not he, for whom death flung life's portal wide,  
 Who stands where Dante's soul in vision came,  
 In Dante's presence, by Mazzini's side

*March 26, 1896*

## CARNOT

DEATH, winged with fire of hate from deathless hell  
Wherein the souls of anarchs hiss and die,  
With stroke as dire has cloven a heart as high  
As twice beyond the wide sea's westward swell  
The living lust of death had power to quell  
Through ministry of murderous hands whereby  
Dark fate bade Lincoln's head and Garfield's lie  
Low even as his who bids his France farewell.

France, now no heart that would not weep with thee  
Loved ever faith or freedom. From thy hand  
The staff of state is broken : hope, unmanned  
With anguish, doubts if freedom's self be free.  
The snake-souled anarch's fang strikes all the land  
Cold, and all hearts unsundered by the sea.

*June 25, 1894.*

## AFTER THE VERDICT

FRANCE, cloven in twain by fire of hell and hate,  
Shamed with the shame of men her meanest born,  
Soldier and judge whose names, inscribed for scorn,  
Stand vilest on the record writ of fate,  
Lies yet not wholly vile who stood so great,  
Sees yet not all her praise of old outworn.  
Not yet is all her scroll of glory torn,  
Or left for utter shame to desecrate.  
High souls and constant hearts of faithful men  
Sustain her perfect praise with tongue and pen  
Indomitable as honour. Storms may toss  
And soil her standard ere her bark win home :  
But shame falls full upon the Christless cross  
Whose brandmark signs the holy hounds of Rome.

*September 1899.*

## THE TRANSVAAL

PATIENCE, long sick to death, is dead. Too long  
Have sloth and doubt and treason bidden us be  
What Cromwell's England was not, when the sea  
To him bore witness given of Blake how strong  
She stood, a commonweal that brooked no wrong  
From foes less vile than men like wolves set free  
Whose war is waged where none may fight or flee—  
With women and with weanlings. Speech and song  
Lack utterance now for loathing. Scarce we hear  
Foul tongues that blacken God's dishonoured name  
With prayers turned curses and with praise found  
shame  
Defy the truth whose witness now draws near  
To scourge these dogs, agape with jaws afoam,  
Down out of life. Strike, England, and strike  
home.

*October 9, 1899.*

## REVERSE

THE wave that breaks against a forward stroke  
Beats not the swimmer back, but thrills him through  
With joyous trust to win his way anew  
Through stronger seas than first upon him broke  
And triumphed. England's iron-tempered oak  
Shrank not when Europe's might against her grew  
Full, and her sun drank up her foes like dew,  
And lion-like from sleep her strength awoke.

As bold in fight as bold in breach of trust  
We find our foes, and wonder not to find,  
Nor grudge them praise whom honour may not  
bind :  
But loathing more intense than speaks disgust  
Heaves England's heart, when scorn is bound to  
greet  
Hunters and hounds whose tongues would lick  
their feet.

*November 1, 1899*

## THE TURNING OF THE TIDE

STORM, strong with all the bitter heart of hate,  
 Smote England, now nineteen dark years ago,  
 As when the tide's full wrath in seaward flow  
 Smites and bears back the swimmer. Fraud and fate  
 Were leagued against her : fear was fain to prate  
 Of honour in dishonour, pride brought low,  
 And humbleness whence holiness must grow,  
 And greatness born of shame to be so great.

The winter day that withered hope and pride  
 Shines now triumphal on the turning tide  
 That sets once more our trust in freedom free,  
 That leaves a ruthless and a truthless foe  
 And all base hopes that hailed his cause laid low,  
 And England's name a light on land and sea.

*February 27, 1900.*

## ON THE DEATH OF COLONEL BENSON

NORTHUMBERLAND, so proud and sad to-day,  
Weep and rejoice, our mother, whom no son  
More glorious than this dead and deathless one  
Brought ever fame whereon no time shall prey.  
Nor heed we more than he what liars dare say  
Of mercy's holiest duties left undone  
Toward whelps and dams of murderous foes, whom  
none  
Save we had spared or feared to starve and slay.

Alone as Milton and as Wordsworth found  
And hailed their England, when from all around  
Howled all the recreant hate of envious knaves,  
Sublime she stands : while, stifled in the sound,  
Each lie that falls from German boors and slaves  
Falls but as filth dropt in the wandering waves.

*November 4, 1901.*

## ASTRÆA VICTRIX

ENGLAND, elect of time,  
 By freedom sealed sublime,  
 And constant as the sun that saw thy dawn  
 Outshine upon the sea  
 His own in heaven, to be  
 A light that night nor day should see withdrawn,  
 If song may speak not now thy praise,  
 Fame writes it higher than song may soar or faith  
 may gaze.

Dark months on months beheld  
 Hope thwarted, crossed, and quelled,  
 And heard the heartless hounds of hatred bay  
 Aloud against thee, glad  
 As now their souls are sad  
 Who see their hope in hatred pass away  
 And wither into shame and fear  
 And shudder down to darkness, loth to see or hear.

Nought now they hear or see  
 That speaks or shows not thee  
 Triumphant ; not as empires reared of yore,  
 The imperial commonweal  
 That bears thy sovereign seal

And signs thine orient as thy natural shore  
 Free, as no sons but thine may stand,  
 Steers lifeward ever, guided of thy pilot hand.

Fear, masked and veiled by fraud,  
 Found shameful time to applaud  
 Shame, and bow down thy banner towards the  
 dust.  
 And cail on godly shame  
 To desecrate thy name  
 And bid false penitence abjure thy trust :  
 Till England's heart took thought at last,  
 And felt her future kindle from her fiery past.

Then sprang the sunbright fire  
 High as the sun, and higher  
 Than strange men's eyes might watch it undis-  
 mayed :  
 But winds athwart it blew  
 Storm, and the twilight grew  
 Darkness awhile, an unenduring shade :  
 And all base birds and beasts of night  
 Saw no more England now to fear, no loathsome light.

All knaves and slaves at heart  
 Who, knowing thee what thou art,  
 Abhor thee, seeing what none save here may see,  
 Strong freedom, taintless truth,  
 Supreme in ageless youth,  
 Howled all their hate and hope aloud at thee  
 While yet the wavering wind of strife  
 Bore hard against her sail whose freight is hope and  
 life.

And now the quickening tide  
 That brings back power and pride  
 To faith and love whose ensign is thy name  
 Bears down the recreant lie  
 That doomed thy name to die,  
 Sons, friends, and foes behold thy star the same  
 As when it stood in heaven a sun  
 And Europe saw no glory left her sky save one.

And now, as then she saw,  
 She sees with shamefast awe  
 How all unlike all slaves and tyrants born  
 Where bondmen champ the bit  
 And anarchs foam and flit,  
 And day mocks day, and year puts year to scorn,  
 Our mother bore us, English men,  
 Ashamed of shame and strong in mercy, now as then.

We loosed not on these knaves  
 Their scourge-tormented slaves :  
 We held the hand that fain had risen to smite  
 The torturer fast, and made  
 Justice awhile afraid,  
 And righteousness forego her ruthless right :  
 We warred not even with these as they ;  
 We bade not them they preyed on make of them their  
 prey.

All murderous fraud that lurks  
 In hearts where hell's craft works  
 Fought, crawled, and slew in darkness · they that  
 died  
 Dreamed not of foes too base  
 For scorn to grant them grace :

Men wounded, women, children at their side,  
Had found what faith in fiends may live :  
And yet we gave not back what righteous doom would  
give.

No false white flag that fawns  
On faith till murder dawns  
Blood-red from hell-black treason's heart of hate  
Left ever shame's foul brand  
Seared on an English hand :  
And yet our pride vouchsafes them grace too great  
For other pride to dream of : scorn  
Strikes retribution silent as the stars at morn.

And now the living breath  
Whose life puts death to death,  
Freedom, whose name is England, stirs and  
thrills  
The burning darkness through  
Whence fraud and slavery grew,  
We scarce may mourn our dead whose fame fulfils  
The record where her foes have read  
That earth shall see none like her born ere earth be  
dead.

## THE FIRST OF JUNE

PEACE and war are one in proof of England's deathless praise.

One divine day saw her foemen scattered on the sea

Far and fast as storm could speed : the same strong day of days

Sees the imperial commonweal set friends and foes men free.

Save where freedom reigns, whose name is England, fraud and fear

Grind and blind the face of men who look on her and lie :

Now may truth and pride in truth, whose seat of old was here,

See them shamed and stricken blind and dumb as worms that die.

Even before our hallowed hawthorn-blossom pass and cease,

Even as England shines and smiles at last upon the sun,

Comes the word that means for England more than  
passing peace,  
Peace with honour, peace with pride in righteous  
work well done.  
Crowned with flowers the first of all the world and  
all the year,  
Peace, whose name is one with honour born of war,  
is here.

## ROUNDEL.

FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLON

DEATH, I would plead against thy wrong,  
Who hast reft me of my love, my wife,  
And art not satiate yet with strife,  
But needs wilt hold me lingering long.  
No strength since then has kept me strong :  
But what could hurt thee in her life,  
Death ?

Twain we were, and our hearts one song,  
One heart : if that be dead, thy knife  
Hath cut me off alive from life,  
Dead as the carver's figured throng,  
Death !

## A ROUNDDEL OF RABELAIS

THELEME is afar on the waters, adrift and afar,  
Afar and afloat on the waters that flicker and gleam,  
And we feel but her fragrance and see but the  
shadows that mar  
Theleme.

In the sun-coloured mists of the sunrise and sunset  
that steam  
As incense from urns of the twilight, her portals ajar  
Let pass as a shadow the light of the sound of a  
dream.

But the laughter that rings from her cloisters that  
know not a bar  
So kindles delight in desire that the souls in us deem  
He erred not, the seer who discerned on the seas as  
a star  
Theleme.

## LUCIFER

*Écrasez l'infâme.* —VOLTAIRE

*Les prêtres ont raison de l'appeler Lucifer.* —VICTOR HUGO

VOLTAIRE, our England's lover, man divine  
 Beyond all Gods that ever fear adored  
 By right and might, by sceptre and by sword,  
 By godlike love of sunlike truth, made thine  
 Through godlike hate of falsehood's marshlight shine  
 And all the fume of creeds and deeds abhorred  
 Whose light was darkness, till the dawn-star  
 soared,  
 Truth, reason, mercy, justice, keep thy shrine  
 Sacred in memory's temple, seeing that none  
 Of all souls born to strive before the sun  
 Loved ever good or hated evil more.  
 The snake that felt thy heel upon her head,  
 Night's first-born, writhes as though she were not  
 dead,  
 But strikes not, stings not, slays not as before.

## THE CENTENARY OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

SOUND of trumpets blowing down the merriest winds  
of morn,

Flash of hurtless lightnings, laugh of thunders  
loud and glad,

Here should hail the summer day whereon a light  
was born

Whence the sun grew brighter, seeing the world  
less dark and sad.

Man of men by right divine of boyhood everlasting,  
France incarnate, France immortal in her deathless  
boy,

Brighter birthday never shone than thine on earth,  
forecasting

More of strenuous mirth in manhood, more of  
manful joy.

Child of warriors, friend of warriors, Garibaldi's  
friend,

Even thy name is as the splendour of a sunbright  
sword :

While the boy's heart beats in man, thy fame shall  
find not end :

Time and dark oblivion bow before thee as their  
lord.

Youth acclaims thee gladdest of the gods that gild  
his days :  
Age gives thanks for thee, and death lacks heart to  
quench thy praise.

## AT A DOG'S GRAVE

## I

GOOD NIGHT, we say, when comes the time to win  
 The daily death divine that shuts up sight,  
 Sleep, that assures for all who dwell therein  
 Good night.

The shadow shed round those we love shines bright  
 As love's own face, when death, sleep's gentler twin,  
 From them divides us even as night from light.

Shall friends born lower in life, though pure of sin,  
 Though clothed with love and faith to usward plight,  
 Perish and pass unbidden of us, their kin,  
 Good night ?

## ii

To die a dog's death once was held for shame.  
 Not all men so beloved and mourned shall lie  
 As many of these, whose time untimely came  
 To die.

His years were full : his years were joyous : why  
 Must love be sorrow, when his gracious name  
 Recalls his lovely life of limb and eye ?

If aught of blameless life on earth may claim  
Life higher than death, though death's dark wave  
rise high,  
Such life as this among us never came  
To die.

## III

White violets, there by hands more sweet than they  
Planted, shall sweeten April's flowerful air  
About a grave that shows to night and day  
White violets there.

A child's light hands, whose touch makes flowers  
more fair,  
Keep fair as these for many a March and May  
The light of days that are because they were.

It shall not like a blossom pass away ;  
It broods and brightens with the days that bear  
Fresh fruits of love, but leave, as love might pray,  
White violets there.

## THREE WEEKS OLD

THREE weeks since there was no such rose in being ;  
Now may eyes made dim with deep delight  
See how fair it is, laugh with love, and seeing  
Praise the chance that bids us bless the sight.

Three weeks old, and a very rose of roses,  
Bright and sweet as love is sweet and bright.  
Heaven and earth, till a man's life wanes and closes,  
Show not life or love a lovelier sight.

Three weeks past have renewed the rosebright  
creature  
Day by day with life, and night by night.  
Love, though fain of its every faultless feature,  
Finds not words to match the silent sight.

## A CLASP OF HANDS

## I

SOFT, small, and sweet as sunniest flowers  
 That bask in heavenly heat  
 When bud by bud breaks, breathes, and cowers,  
 Soft, small, and sweet.

A babe's hands open as to greet  
 The tender touch of ours  
 And mock with motion faint and fleet

The minutes of the new strange hours  
 That earth, not heaven, must mete ;  
 Buds fragrant still from heaven's own bowers,  
 Soft, small, and sweet.

## II

A velvet vice with springs of steel  
 That fasten in a trice  
 And clench the fingers fast that feel  
 A velvet vice—

What man would risk the danger twice,  
 Nor quake from head to heel?  
 Whom would not one such test suffice?

Well may we tremble as we kneel  
In sight of Paradise,  
If both a babe's closed fists conceal  
A velvet vice.

## III

Two flower-soft fists of conquering clutch,  
Two creased and dimpled wrists,  
That match, if mottled overmuch,  
Two flower-soft fists—

What heart of man dare hold the lists  
Against such odds and such  
Sweet vantage as no strength resists?

Our strength is all a broken crutch,  
Our eyes are dim with mists,  
Our hearts are prisoners as we touch  
Two flower-soft fists.

## PROLOGUE TO DOCTOR FAUSTUS

LIGHT, as when dawn takes wing and smites the sea,  
 Smote England when his day bade Marlowe be.  
 No fire so keen had thrilled the clouds of time  
 Since Dante's breath made Italy sublime.  
 Earth, bright with flowers whose dew shone soft as  
 tears,  
 Through Chaucer cast her charm on eyes and ears :  
 The lustrous laughter of the love-lit earth  
 Rang, leapt, and lightened in his might of mirth.  
 Deep moonlight, hallowing all the breathless air,  
 Made earth and heaven for Spenser faint and fair.  
 But song might bid not heaven and earth be one  
 Till Marlowe's voice gave warning of the sun.  
 Thought quailed and fluttered as a wounded bird  
 Till passion fledged the wing of Marlowe's word.  
 Faith born of fear bade hope and doubt be dumb  
 Till Marlowe's pride bade light or darkness come.  
 Then first our speech was thunder : then our song  
 Shot lightning through the clouds that wrought us  
 wrong.  
 Blind fear, whose faith feeds hell with fire, became  
 A moth self-shrivelled in its own blind flame.  
 We heard, in tune with even our seas that roll,  
 The speech of storm, the thunders of the soul.

1244 PROLOGUE TO DOCTOR FAUSTUS

Men's passions, clothed with all the woes they wrought,

Shone through the fire of man's transfiguring thought.

The thirst of knowledge, quenchless at her springs,

Ambition, fire that clasps the thrones of kings,

Love, light that makes of life one lustrous hour,

And song, the soul's chief crown and throne of power,

The hungering heart of greed and ravenous hate,

Made music high as heaven and deep as fate.

Strange pity, scarce half scornful of her tear,

In Berkeley's vaults bowed down on Edward's bier.

But higher in forceful flight of song than all

The soul of man, its own imperious thrall,

Rose, when his royal spirit of fierce desire

Made life and death for man one flame of fire.

Incarnate man, fast bound as earth and sea,

Spake, when his pride would fain set Faustus free.

Eternal beauty, strong as day and night,

Shone, when his word bade Helen back to sight.

Fear, when he bowed the soul before her spell,

Thundered and lightened through the vaults of hell.

The music known of all men's tongues that sing,

When Marlowe sang, bade love make heaven of  
spring ;

The music none but English tongues may make,

Our own sole song, spake first when Marlowe spake ;

And on his grave, though there no stone may stand,

The flower it shows was laid by Shakespeare's hand.

## PROLOGUE TO ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM

LOVE dark as death and fierce as fire on wing  
Sustains in sin the soul that feels it cling  
Like flame whose tongues are serpents : hope and fear  
Die when a love more dire than hate draws near,  
And stings to death the heart it cleaves in twain,  
And leaves in ashes all but fear and pain.  
Our lustrous England rose to life and light  
From Rome's and hell's immitigable night,  
And music laughed and quickened from her breath,  
When first her sons acclaimed Elizabeth.  
Her soul became a lyre that all men heard  
Who felt their souls give back her lyric word.  
Yet now not all at once her perfect power  
Spake : man's deep heart abode awhile its hour,  
Abode its hour of utterance ; not to wake  
Till Marlowe's thought in thunderous music spake.  
But yet not yet was passion's tragic breath  
Thrilled through with sense of instant life and death,  
Life actual even as theirs who watched the strife,  
Death dark and keen and terrible as life.  
Here first was truth in song made perfect : here  
Woke first the war of love and hate and fear.  
A man too vile for thought's or shame's control  
Holds empire on a woman's loftier soul,

1246 PROLOGUE TO ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM

And withers it to wickedness : in vain  
Shame quickens thought with penitential pain :  
In vain dark chance's fitful providence  
Withholds the crime, and chills the spirit of sense :  
It wakes again in fire that burns away  
Repentance, weak as night devoured of day.  
Remorse, and ravenous thirst of sin and crime,  
Rend and consume the soul in strife sublime,  
And passion cries on pity till it hear  
And tremble as with love that casts out fear.  
Dark as the deed and doom he gave to fame  
For ever lies the sovereign singer's name.  
Sovereign and regent on the soul he lives  
While thought gives thanks for aught remembrance  
gives,  
And mystery sees the imperial shadow stand  
By Marlowe's side alone at Shakespeare's hand.

## PROLOGUE TO OLD FORTUNATUS

THE golden bells of fairyland, that ring  
Perpetual chime for childhood's flower-sweet spring,  
Sang soft memorial music in his ear  
Whose answering music shines about us here.  
Soft laughter as of light that stirs the sea  
With darkling sense of dawn ere dawn may be,  
Kind sorrow, pity touched with gentler scorn,  
Keen wit whose shafts were sunshafts of the morn,  
Love winged with fancy, fancy thrilled with love,  
An eagle's aim and ardour in a dove,  
A man's delight and passion in a child,  
Inform it as when first they wept and smiled.  
Life, soiled and rent and ringed about with pain  
Whose touch lent action less of spur than chain,  
Left half the happiness his birth designed,  
And half the power, unquenched in heart and mind.  
Comrade and comforter, sublime in shame,  
A poor man bound in prison whence he came  
Poor, and took up the burden of his life  
Smiling, and strong to strive with sorrow and strife,  
He spake in England's ear the poor man's word,  
Manful and mournful, deathless and unheard.  
His kind great heart was fire, and love's own fire,  
Compassion, strong as flesh may feel desire,

1248 PROLOGUE TO OLD FORTUNATUS

To enkindle pity and mercy toward a soul  
Sunk down in shame too deep for shame's control.  
His kind keen eye was light to lighten hope  
Where no man else might see life's darkness ope  
And pity's touch bring forth from evil good,  
Sweet as forgiveness, strong as fatherhood.  
Names higher than his outshine it and outsoar,  
But none save one should memory cherish more :  
Praise and thanksgiving crown the names above,  
But him we give the gift he gave us, love.

## PROLOGUE TO THE DUCHESS OF MALFY

WHEN Shakespeare soared from life to death, above  
 All praise, all adoration, save of love,  
 As here on earth above all men he stood  
 That were or are or shall be—great, and good,  
 Past thank or thought of England or of man—  
 Light from the sunset quickened as it ran.  
 His word, who sang as never man may sing  
 And spake as never voice of man may ring,  
 Not fruitless fell, as seed on sterile ways,  
 But brought forth increase even to Shakespeare's  
 praise.

Our skies were thrilled and filled, from sea to sea,  
 With stars outshining all their suns to be.  
 No later light of tragic song they knew  
 Like his whose lightning clove the sunset through.  
 Half Shakespeare's glory, when his hand sublime  
 Bade all the change of tragic life and time  
 Live, and outlive all date of quick and dead,  
 Fell, rested, and shall rest on Webster's head.  
 Round him the shadows cast on earth by light  
 Rose, changed, and shone, transfiguring death and  
 night.  
 Where evil only crawled and hissed and slew  
 On ways where nought save shame and bloodshed  
 grew,

1250 PROLOGUE TO THE DUCHESS OF MALFY

He bade the loyal light of honour live,  
And love, when stricken through the heart, forgive.  
Deep down the midnight of the soul of sin  
He lit the star of mercy throned therein.  
High up the darkness of sublime despair  
He set the sun of love to triumph there.  
Things foul or frail his touch made strong and pure,  
And bade things transient like to stars endure.  
Terror, on wings whose flight made night in heaven,  
Pity, with hands whence life took love for leaven,  
Breathed round him music whence his mortal breath  
Drew life that bade forgetfulness and death  
Die : life that bids his light of fiery fame  
Endure with England's, yea, with Shakespeare's  
name.

## PROLOGUE TO THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

FIRE, and behind the breathless flight of fire  
Thunder that quickens fear and quells desire,  
Make bright and loud the terror of the night  
Wherein the soul sees only wrath for light.  
Wrath winged by love and sheathed by grief in steel  
Sets on the front of crime death's withering seal.  
The heaving horror of the storms of sin  
Brings forth in fear the lightning hid therein,  
And flashes back to darkness: truth, found pure  
And perfect, asks not heaven if shame endure.  
What life and death were his whose raging song  
Bore heaven such witness of the wild world's wrong,  
What hand was this that grasped such thunder, none  
Knows: night and storm seclude him from the sun.  
By daytime none discerns the fire of Mars:  
Deep darkness bares to sight the sterner stars,  
The lights whose dawn seems doomsday. None may  
tell  
Whence rose a world so lit from heaven and hell.  
Life-wasting love, hate born of raging lust,  
Fierce retribution, fed with death's own dust  
And sorrow's pampering poison, cross and meet,  
And wind the world in passion's winding-sheet.  
So, when dark faith in faith's dark ages heard  
Falsehood, and drank the poison of the Word,

1252 PROLOGUE TO REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

Two shades misshapen came to monstrous birth,  
A father fiend in heaven, a thrall on earth :  
Man, meanest born of beasts that press the sod,  
And die : the vilest of his creatures, God.  
A judge unjust, a slave that praised his name, ↗  
Made life and death one fire of sin and shame.  
And thence reverberate even on Shakespeare's age  
A light like darkness crossed his sunbright stage.  
Music, sublime as storm or sorrow, sang  
Before it : tempest like a harpstring rang.  
The fiery shadow of a name unknown  
Rose, and in song's high heaven abides alone.

## PROLOGUE TO THE BROKEN HEART

THE mightiest choir of song that memory hears  
Gave England voice for fifty lustrous years.  
Sunrise and thunder fired and shook the skies  
That saw the sun-god Marlowe's opening eyes.  
The morn's own music, answered of the sea,  
Spake, when his living lips bade Shakespeare be,  
And England, made by Shakespeare's quickening  
breath  
Divine and deathless even till life be death,  
Brought forth to time such godlike sons of men  
That shamefaced love grows pride, and now seems  
then.  
Shame that their day so shone, so sang, so died,  
Remembering, finds remembrance one with pride.  
That day was clouding toward a stormlit close  
When Ford's red sphere upon the twilight rose.  
Sublime with stars and sunset fire, the sky  
Glowed as though day, nigh dead, should never die.  
Sorrow supreme and strange as chance or doom  
Shone, spake, and shuddered through the lustrous  
gloom.  
Tears lit with love made all the darkening air  
Bright as though death's dim sunrise thrilled it there  
And life re-risen took comfort. Stern and still  
As hours and years that change and anguish fill,

The strong secluded spirit, ere it woke,  
Dwelt dumb till power possessed it, and it spoke.  
Strange, calm, and sure as sense of beast or bird,  
Came forth from night the thought that breathed the  
word ;

That chilled and thrilled with passion-stricken breath  
Halls where Calantha trod the dance of death.  
A strength of soul too passionately pure  
To change for aught that horror bids endure,  
To quail and wail and weep faint life away  
Ere sovereign sorrow smite, relent, and slay,  
Sustained her silent, till her bridal bloom  
Changed, smiled, and waned in rapture toward the  
tomb.

Terror twin-born with pity kissed and thrilled  
The lips that Shakespeare's word or Webster's filled :  
Here both, cast out, fell silent : pity shrank,  
Rebuked, and terror, spirit-stricken, sank :  
The soul assailed arose afar above  
All reach of all but only death and love.

## PROLOGUE TO A VERY WOMAN

SWIFT music made of passion's changeful power,  
Sweet as the change that leaves the world in flower  
When spring laughs winter down to deathward, rang<sup>•</sup>  
From grave and gracious lips that smiled and sang  
When Massinger, too wise for kings to hear  
And learn of him truth, wisdom, faith, or fear,  
Gave all his gentler heart to love's light lore,  
That grief might brood and scorn breed wrath no  
more.

Soft, bright, fierce, tender, fitful, truthful, sweet,  
A shrine where faith and change might smile and  
meet,  
A soul whose music could but shift its tune  
As when the lustrous year turns May to June  
And spring subsides in summer, so makes good  
Its perfect claim to very womanhood.

The heart that hate of wrong made fire, the hand  
Whose touch was fire as keen as shame's own brand  
When fraud and treason, swift to smile and sting,  
Crowned and discrowned a tyrant, knave or king,  
False each and ravenous as the fitful sea,  
Grew gently glad as love that fear sets free.  
Like eddying ripples that the wind restrains,  
The bright words whisper music ere it wanes.

1256 PROLOGUE TO A VERY WOMAN

Ere fades the sovereign sound of song that rang  
As though the sun to match the sea's tune sang,  
When noon from dawn took life and light, and time  
Shone, seeing how Shakespeare made the world  
        sublime,  
Ere sinks the wind whose breath was heaven's and  
        day's,  
The sunset's witness gives the sundawn praise.

## PROLOGUE TO THE SPANISH GIPSY

THE wind that brings us from the springtide south  
 Strange music as from love's or life's own mouth  
 Blew hither, when the blast of battle ceased  
 That swept back southward Spanish prince and priest,  
 A sound more sweet than April's flower-sweet rain,  
 And bade bright England smile on pardoned Spain.  
 The land that cast out Philip and his God  
 Grew gladly subject where Cervantes trod.  
 Even he whose name above all names on earth  
 Crowns England queen by grace of Shakespeare's birth  
 Might scarce have scorned to smile in God's wise down  
 And gild with praise from heaven an earthlier crown.  
 And he whose hand bade live down lengthening years  
 Quixote, a name lit up with smiles and tears,  
 Gave the glad watchword of the gipsies' life,  
 Where fear took hope and grief took joy to wife.  
 Times change, and fame is fitful as the sea :  
 But sunset bids not darkness always be,  
 And still some light from Shakespeare and the sun  
 Burns back the cloud that masks not Middleton.  
 With strong swift strokes of love and wrath he drew  
 Shakespearean London's loud and lusty crew :  
 No plainer might the likeness rise and stand  
 When Hogarth took his living world in hand.

## 1258 PROLOGUE TO THE SPANISH GIPSY

No surer then his fire-fledged shafts could hit,  
Winged with as forceful and as faithful wit :  
No truer a tragic depth and heat of heart  
Glowed through the painter's than the poet's art.  
He lit and hung in heaven the wan fierce moon  
Whose glance kept time with witchcraft's air-struck  
tune :

He watched the doors where loveless love let in  
The pageant hailed and crowned by death and sin  
He bared the souls where love, twin-born with hate,  
Made wide the way for passion-fostered fate.  
All English-hearted, all his heart arose  
To scourge with scorn his England's cowring foes :  
And Rome and Spain, who bade their scorner be  
Their prisoner, left his heart as England's free.  
Now give we all we may of all his due  
To one long since thus tried and found thus true.

## PROLOGUE TO THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

SWEET as the dewfall, splendid as the south,  
Love touched with speech Boccaccio's golden mouth,  
Joy thrilled and filled its utterance full with song,  
And sorrow smiled on doom that wrought no wrong.  
A starrier lustre of lordlier music rose  
Beyond the sundering bar of seas and snows  
When Chaucer's thought took life and light from his  
And England's crown was one with Italy's.  
Loftiest and last, by grace of Shakespeare's word,  
Arose above their quiring spheres a third,  
Arose; and flashed, and faltered : song's deep sky  
Saw Shakespeare pass in light, in music die.  
No light like his, no music, man might give  
To bid the darkened sphere, left songless, live.  
Soft though the sound of Fletcher's rose and rang  
And lit the lunar darkness as it sang,  
Below the singing stars the cloud-crossed moon  
Gave back the sunken sun's a trembling tune.  
As when at highest high tide the sovereign sea  
Pauses, and patience doubts if passion be,  
Till gradual ripples ebb, recede, recoil,  
Shine, smile, and whisper, laughing as they toil,  
Stark silence fell, at turn of fate's high tide,  
Upon his broken song when Shakespeare died,

1260 PROLOGUE TO TWO NOBLE KINSMEN

Till Fletcher's light sweet speech took heart to say  
What evening, should it speak for morning, may.  
And fourfold now the gradual glory shines  
That shows once more in heaven two twinborn signs,  
Two brethren stars whose light no cloud may fret,  
No soul whereon their story dawns forget.

## THE AFTERGLOW OF SHAKESPEARE

LET there be light, said Time : and England heard :  
 And manhood grew to godhead at the word.  
 No light had shone, since earth arose from sleep,  
 So far ; no fire of thought had cloven so deep.  
 A day beyond all days bade life acclaim  
 Shakespeare : and man put on his crowning name.  
 All secrets once through darkling ages kept  
 Shone, sang, and smiled to think how long they slept.  
 Man rose past fear of lies whereon he trod :  
 And Dante's ghost saw hell devour his God.  
 Bright Marlowe, brave as winds that brave the sea  
 When sundawn bids their bliss in battle be,  
 Lit England first along the ways whereon  
 Song brighter far than sunlight soared and shone.  
 He died ere half his life had earned his right  
 To lighten time with song's triumphant light.  
 Hope shrank, and felt the stroke at heart : but one  
 She knew not rose, a man to match the sun.  
 And England's hope and time's and man's became  
 Joy, deep as music's heart and keen as flame.  
 Not long, for heaven on earth may live not long,  
 Light sang, and darkness died before the song.  
 He passed, the man above all men, whose breath  
 Transfigured life with speech that lightens death.  
 He passed : but yet for many a lustrous year  
 His light of song bade England shine and hear.

As plague and fire and faith in falsehood spread,  
So from the man of men, divine and dead,  
Contagious godhead, seen, unknown, and heard,  
Fulfilled and quickened England ; thought and word,  
When men would fain set life to music, grew  
More sweet than years which knew not Shakespeare  
knew.

The simplest soul that set itself to song  
Sang, and may fear not time's or change's wrong.  
The lightest eye that glanced on life could see  
Through grief and joy the God that man might be.  
All passion whence the living soul takes fire  
Till death fulfil despair and quench desire,  
All love that lightens through the cloud of chance,  
All hate that lurks in hope and smites askance,  
All holiness of sorrow, all divine  
Pity, whose tears are stars that save and shine,  
All sunbright strength of laughter like the sea's  
When spring and autumn loose their lustrous breeze,  
All sweet, all strange, all sad, all glorious things,  
Lived on his lips, and hailed him king of kings.  
All thought, all strife, all anguish, all delight,  
Spake all he bade, and speak till day be night.  
No soul that heard, no spirit that beheld,  
Knew not the God that lured them and compelled.  
On Beaumont's brow the sun arisen afar  
Shed fire which lit through heaven the younger star  
That sank before the sunset : one dark spring  
Slew first the kinglike subject, then the king.  
The glory left above their graves made strong  
The heart of Fletcher, till the flower-sweet song  
That Shakespeare culled from Chaucer's field, and  
died,  
Found ending on his lips that smiled and sighed.

From Dekker's eyes the light of tear-touched mirth  
Shone as from Shakespeare's, mingling heaven and earth.

Wild witchcraft's lure and England's love made one  
With Shakespeare's heart the heart of Middleton.

Harsh, homely, true, and tragic, Rowley told  
His heart's debt down in rough and radiant gold.  
The skies that Tourneur's lightning clove and rent  
Flamed through the clouds where Shakespeare's  
thunder went.

Wise Massinger bade kings be wise in vain  
Ere war bade song, storm-stricken, cower and wane.  
Kind Heywood, simple-souled and single-eyed,  
Found voice for England's home-born praise and  
pride.

Strange grief, strange love, strange terror, bared the  
sword

That smote the soul by grace and will of Ford.  
The stern grim strength of Chapman's thought found  
speech

Loud as when storm at ebb-tide rends the beach :  
And all the honey brewed from flowers in May  
Made sweet the lips and bright the dreams of Day.  
But even as Shakespeare caught from Marlowe's word  
Fire, so from his the thunder-bearing third,  
Webster, took light and might whence none but he  
Hath since made song that sounded so the sea  
Whose waves are lives of men—whose tidestream rolls  
From year to darkening year the freight of souls.  
Alone above it, sweet, supreme, sublime,  
Shakespeare attunes the jarring chords of time  
Alone of all whose doom is death and birth,  
Shakespeare is lord of souls alive on earth.



# **CLEOPATRA**

• Her beauty might outface the jealous hours,  
Turn shame to love and pain to a tender sleep,  
And the strong nerve of hate to sloth and tears ;  
Make spring rebellious in the sides of frost,  
Thrust out lank winter with hot August growths,  
Compel sweet blood into the husks of death,  
And from strange beasts enforce harsh courtesy."

T. HAYMAN, *Fall of Antony*, 1655

## CLEOPATRA

## I

HER mouth is fragrant as a vine,  
 A vine with birds in all its boughs ;  
 Serpent and scarab for a sign  
 Between the beauty of her brows  
 And the amorous deep lids divine.

## II

Her great curled hair makes luminous  
 Her cheeks, her lifted throat and chin  
 Shall she not have the hearts of us  
 To shatter, and the loves therein  
 To shred between her fingers thus ?

## III

Small ruined broken strays of light,  
 Pearl after pearl she shreds them through  
 Her long sweet sleepy fingers, white  
 As any pearl's heart veined with blue,  
 And soft as dew on a soft night.

## IV

As if the very eyes of love  
 Shone through her shutting lids, and stole  
 The slow looks of a snake or dove ;  
 As if her lips absorbed the whole  
 Of love, her soul the soul thereof.

## V

Lost, all the lordly pearls that were  
 Wrung from the sea's heart, from the green  
 Coasts of the Indian gulf-river ;  
 Lost, all the loves of the world—so keen  
 Towards this queen for love of her.

## VI

You see against her throat the small  
 Sharp glittering shadows of them shake ;  
 And through her hair the imperial  
 Curled likeness of the river snake,  
 Whose bite shall make an end of all.

## VII

Through the scales sheathing him like wings,  
 Through hieroglyphs of gold and gem,  
 The strong sense of her beauty stings,  
 Like a keen pulse of love in them,  
 A running flame through all his rings.

## VIII

Under those low large lids of hers  
She hath the histories of all time ;  
The fruit of foliage-stricken years ;  
The old seasons with their heavy chime  
That leaves its rhyme in the world's ears.

## IX

She sees the hand of death made bare,  
The ravelled riddle of the skies,  
The faces faded that were fair,  
The mouths made speechless that were wise.  
The hollow eyes and dusty hair ;

## X

The shape and shadow of mystic things,  
Things that fate fashions or forbids ;  
The staff of time-forgotten Kings  
Whose name falls off the Pyramids,  
Their coffin-lids and grave-clothings ;

## XI

Dank dregs, the scum of pool or clod,  
God-spawn of lizard-footed clans,  
And those dog-headed hulks that trod  
Swart necks of the old Egyptians,  
Raw draughts of man's beginning God ;

## XII

The poised hawk, quivering ere he smote,  
 With plume-like gems on breast and back ;  
 The asps and water-worms afloat  
 Between the rush-flowers moist and slack ;  
 The cat's warm black bright rising throat.

## XIII

The purple days of drouth expand  
 Like a scroll opened out again ;  
 The molten heaven drier than sand,  
 The hot red heaven without rain,  
 Sheds iron pain on the empty land.

## XIV

All Egypt aches in the sun's sight ;  
 The lips of men are harsh for drouth,  
 The fierce air leaves their cheeks burnt white,  
 Charred by the bitter blowing south,  
 Whose dusty mouth is sharp to bite.

## XV

All this she dreams of, and her eyes  
 Are wrought after the sense hereof.  
 There is no heart in her for sighs ;  
 The face of her is more than love—  
 A name above the Ptolemies.

## XVI

Her great grave beauty covers her  
As that sleek spoil beneath her feet  
Clothed once the anointed soothsayer ;  
The hallowing is gone forth from it  
Now, made unmeet for priests to wear.

## XVII

She treads on gods and god-like things,  
On fate and fear and life and death,  
On hate that cleaves and love that clings,  
All that is brought forth of man's breath  
And perisheth with what it brings.

## XVIII

She holds her future close, her lips  
Hold fast the face of things to be ;  
Actium, and sound of war that dips  
Down the blown valleys of the sea,  
Far sails that flee, and storms of ships ;

## XIX

The laughing red sweet mouth of wine  
At ending of life's festival ;  
That spice of cerecloths, and the fine  
White bitter dust funereal  
Sprinkled on all things for a sign ;

## XX

His face, who was and was not he,  
In whom, alive, her life abode ;  
The end, when she gained heart to see  
Those ways of death wherein she trod,  
Goddess by god, with Antony.

## **DEDICATION**



## DEDICATION

THE sea that is life everlasting  
 And death everlasting as life  
 Abides not a pilot's forecasting,  
 Foretells not of peace or of strife.  
 The might of the night that was hidden  
 Arises and darkens the day,  
 A glory rebuked and forbidden,  
 Time's crown, and his prey.

No sweeter, no kindlier, no fairer,  
 No lovelier a soul from its birth  
 Wore ever a brighter and rarer  
 Life's raiment for life upon earth  
 Than his who enkindled and cherished  
 Art's vestal and luminous flame,  
 That dies not when kingdoms have perished  
 In storm or in shame.

No braver, no trustier, no purer,  
 No stronger and clearer a soul  
 Bore witness more splendid and surer  
 For manhood found perfect and whole  
 Since man was a warrior and dreamer  
 Than his who in hatred of wrong  
 Would fain have arisen a redeemer  
 By sword or by song.

## DEDICATION

Twin brethren in spirit, immortal  
 As art and as love, which were one  
 For you from the birthday whose portal  
 First gave you to sight of the sun,  
 To-day nor to-night nor to-morrow  
 May bring you again from above,  
 Drawn down by the spell of the sorrow  
 Whose anguish is love.

No light rearising hereafter  
 Shall lighten us here as of old  
 When seasons were lustrous as laughter  
 Of waves that are snowshine and gold.  
 The dawn that imbues and enkindles  
 Life's fluctuant and fugitive sea  
 Dies down as the starshine that dwindleth  
 And cares not to be.

Men, mightier than death which divides us,  
 Friends, dearer than sorrow can say,  
 The light that is darkness and hides us  
 Awhile from each other away  
 Abides but awhile and endures not,  
 We know, though the day be as night,  
 For souls that forgetfulness lures not  
 Till sleep be in sight.

The sleep that enfolds you, the slumber  
 Supreme and eternal on earth,  
 Whence ages of numberless number  
 Shall bring us not back into birth,  
 We know not indeed if it be not  
 What no man hath known if it be,  
 Life, quickened with light that we see not  
 If spirits may see.

The love that would see and would know it  
Is even as the love of a child.  
But the fire of the fame of the poet  
Who gazed on the past, and it smiled,  
But the light of the fame of the painter  
Whose hand was as morning's in May,  
Death bids not be darker or fainter,  
Time casts not away.

We, left of them loveless and lonely,  
Who lived in the light of their love,  
Whose darkness desires it, we only,  
Who see them afar and above,  
So far, if we die not, above us,  
So lately no dearer than near,  
May know not of death if they love us,  
Of night if they hear.

We, stricken and darkling and living,  
Who loved them and love them, abide  
A day, and the gift of its giving,  
An hour, and the turn of its tide,  
When twilight and midnight and morrow  
Shall pass from the sight of the sun,  
And death be forgotten, and sorrow  
Discrowned and undone.

For us as for these will the breathless  
Brief minute arise and pass by :  
And if death be not utterly deathless,  
If love do not utterly die,  
From the life that is quenched as an ember  
The soul that aspires as a flame  
Can choose not but wholly remember  
Love, lovelier than fame.

Though sure be the seal of their glory  
And fairer no fame upon earth,  
Though never a leaf shall grow hoary  
Of the crowns that were given them at birth,  
While time as a vassal doth duty  
To names that he towers not above,  
More perfect in price and in beauty  
For ever is love.

The night is upon us, and anguish  
Of longing that yearns for the dead.  
But mourners that faint not or languish,  
That veil not and bow not the head,  
Take comfort to heart if a token  
Be given them of comfort to be :  
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